

Exploring oral fluency development through the use of fluency development techniques  
in A1 students in the context of Colombian Caribbean Outreach EFL Program.

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## Table of content

Introduction.....	3
Theoretical Framework.....	11
The content of the proposal.....	21
Needs analysis.....	24
Needs analysis results.....	26
Proposal.....	28
Objective.....	28
Details of the proposal.....	29
Piloting.....	31
Result of piloting.....	41
Bibliography.....	51
Appendices.....	54

## 1. Introduction

As teachers many times we have found students in the classroom that have good English foundations. They already know grammar structures, vocabulary, and they are able to write short phrases and paragraphs, but at the moment to speak, they do not seem to have developed good fluency in speaking, even after studying English for several years. This lack of oral fluency tends to make communication unsuccessful because sometimes the recipient does not understand the message since the interaction is interrupted by a lot of pauses and hesitations. That is why, the present study looks for a better application of the available resources in the learning, teaching, and the development of fluency in the English classes. All this with the purpose to explore what techniques for fluency development can be more beneficial or appropriate for A1 students in the context of a Colombian Caribbean outreach EFL program.

In the context of English teaching in Colombia, the skills to be developed by students and taught by teachers are essentially the basic ones: speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Each of these skills has to be promptly attended by the teacher to help students develop their communicative competences, and the way to develop them is indicated either by institutional or government guidelines. In Colombia, the document, “Vision Colombia 2019” (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2006), states that students should reach an intermediate level of English proficiency when they complete their high school studies (Level B1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, 2001), enabling them to communicate in the L2, acquire knowledge, and use it in real communication situations.

However, taking an overview of the proficiency of the English students in Colombia at the completion of the normal academic path, it does not result too well according to some standardized international parameters. The lack of language proficiency is evident in some international test, as indicate the results showed in the international test of EF English Proficiency Index, (EF EPI, 2016).It This exam usually presents reports to identify the way English speakers do at different areas of their language skills. It is considered an important international benchmark for adults' English proficiency, and defined as: "the world's largest ranking of countries by adult English skills" (EF EPI, 2016). Although, it is important to clarify that this exam is not taken by all students at the end of school, this shows the results of a significant percentage of students who taking the test in Colombia, which, serves as a reference in this research.

The EF reported in 2016 Colombia was categorized in the 49th position of the worldwide ranking of English level showing a poor performance of the English learning. The report on Colombia evidenced the very low English proficiency of the adult Colombian population. The results presented in this report ranked the people evaluated at A1 or A2 level of English, which are the lowest or more basic levels of English, which is contradictory to the level established by the Ministry of Education in Colombia for graduated high school students.

In relation to this aspect, the Common European Framework, (2001) states that people in A1 and A2 levels should understand and use familiar expressions and phrases, even ask and answer about personal details, and they should interact with others in some specific situations. In other words, they should be basic users of the language. This includes a minimum level of fluency when they speak.

In addition, the CEFR, (2001) requires that students in level A1 or A2 should make themselves understood in short utterances, even though they show pauses and false starts. They also should be able to manage basic and isolated sentences while trying to express the proper idea. That's the reason why, it is necessary to explore techniques and strategies that help students develop oral production and fluency to be able to interact using the English skills and knowledge acquired during their academic studies.

However, there are failures and difficulties in the English speaking skill development, in particular, fluency development in our country and many institutions. The English language teaching community in Colombia needs to concentrate on effective ways to guide students' language learning process. This fact implies a big challenge for all the English teachers who must go deeper than only teaching isolated vocabulary and grammar rules, but must go deeper in preparing the students in how to use it to communicate and to use English throughout their lives.

In the Colombian Caribbean context, speaking can be considered the skill that requires more attention given that there is greater emphasis on the teaching of reading, grammar, and vocabulary in the general in educational institutions. Clara Amador Watson, an expert in bilingualism and the development of English as a second language affirm when she visited some institutions in Colombia that schools and institutions in our country continue using archaic or traditional methods to teach. (as cited in Linares, 2011)

Although in Colombia the National Program of Bilingualism tries to prioritize the learning of English, in some institutions English is no more than a subject. In some schools English teaching is commonly focused on grammar. Teachers generally encourage translation (word by word), and they continue teaching the verb to be in a traditional way; children usually fill in the blanks to complete sentences. As Clara Amador Watson, (2011) points out in the interview made

by the journalist Linares: “it is common to find that teachers continue teaching grammatical structures without paying attention to the oral production in English” Amador ( cited in Linares 2011).

This situation makes speaking a potentially underestimated skill. Thus, English courses should give more opportunities to students to be exposed to the authentic language and encourage the production of real language, making emphasis in the development of speaking and fluency at the moment to interact with others.

Furthermore, The National Ministry of Education continue working in some projects related to Institutions of Higher Education in Colombia (Ministerio de Educacion, 2015) in order to contribute to the improvement of the quality of education, monitor the development of basic skills in students, and improve the access of young people to higher education. One of the tests applied to measure the education quality in Instituciones de Educacion Superior (IES) are " PRUEBAS SABER PRO." This is a Government's tool to assess and monitor the skills developed by undergraduates in Colombia at different levels and areas of knowledge. This test is taken by students in the last semesters of the undergraduate programs of study, as a requirement to obtain the professional certificate according to the law 1324.(Ministerio de Educacion, 2009). This test evaluates written communication, quantitative reasoning, critical reading, and citizenship skills and also English language (Corporacion de Educacion Superior ISES, 2017).

According to the report presented by ICFES in pruebas saber pro 2013- 2014, the results obtained by students of Universidad del Atlántico, in Barranquilla showed a low level of performance in English. Most of students in the last semesters in Universidad del Atlantico are between level A1 and A2 of English language proficiency. This information is problematic if compared to what the National Ministry of Education states, which is that by the time students

finish high school, they should have achieved B1 or B2 level according to the CEFR. (Common European Framework of Reference, 2001).

That is why, The MEN (National Ministry of Education in Colombia) constantly follows up on the English proficiency results obtained by students and often makes the nationwide standardized test for the English teachers to assess the global situation of the bilingual education and provide to teachers ways to improve their English level since The Ministry of Education state that "to achieve the proposed goals of Colombia Bilingue, it is necessary to improve the level of English of teachers who teach this language in the official sector".(Colombia aprende, 2015).

Ministry of Education has established an articulated and integrated work which, promote teachers training, this is one of the fundamental actions as strategy. Also it provide English courses online or face-to-face, classroom support and an incentive plan for short internships abroad. All this with the purpose of creating new ways and strategies to improve the quality of English teaching in Colombia and help students to achieve the English level required.

Additionally, most of students who graduate from high schools and universities have a basic level of understanding and may be able to even write short texts in English, but at the moment when they are going to interact or perform a dialogue within a context, they present significant difficulties to express themselves, and a lack of fluency to express ideas. Sanchez, (2013).

Consequently, this research can be relevant in the Colombian context and even more in Barranquilla's local context because the study will focus on the exploration of effective techniques to develop students' fluency, which makes part of speaking skills. Therefore, this work aims to propose the implementation of some teaching-learning techniques for the students

to develop a better fluency in the English Language. This study can be interesting for teachers and students in the Caribbean context since it will look at the problem in a contextualized way. Furthermore, this work can be beneficial for teachers who want to get better results from and take it on reference from local studies to read about or implement in their own classes.

The study will be carried out in La Escuela Superior de Idiomas of the Universidad del Atlántico located in Barranquilla, Colombia. It is a public institution that offers a six levels of the English program, and there are specific classrooms for each language course. Every class has twenty (20) students, in which there are pupils with different interests and needs since they are studying diverse university programs.

Students in this program attend English classes from Monday to Friday, two hours every evening from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. and from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. The particular sample of students that this work will concentrate on belongs to two different classes sharing the same or similar English proficiency levels. Students' age ranges in these two groups are different. That is to say, in group A students are between 20 and 22 year olds, and students in the other group are between 14 and 17. Most of them have contact with the foreign language out of class, and they also understand English instructions. However, when they try to use English to communicate their ideas in front of an audience or they try to interact without practicing before, they present clear difficulties to express ideas in some classroom situations and also their English does not sound natural when they speak, which makes them lack self-confidence and the message may be misunderstood by the recipient.

Students in Universidad del Atlántico, especially students in level 1 of English courses, have some knowledge about English, but they are not able to speak with a minimum degree of confidence about familiar topics. Sometimes students speak, but their lack of fluency affects



communication, and therefore, this affects listener's understanding of the messages. Another important aspect took into account to define this study was the results obtained from the interview made to the coordinator and principles (see appendix A for interview of principles) where they highlighted that the University works with communicative approach and this is based on the idea that learning language successfully comes through having to communicate real meaning. Classroom activities are characterized by trying to produce meaningful and real communication, at all levels.

In addition the results obtained through the initial questionnaire (see appendix A and B Results of questionnaire) and observations made in classes pointed out the necessity and the importance of students to speak clearly and fluent in English. This is the reason why, this study will focus on the development of speaking skill, particularly oral fluency, and will propose the implementation of different oral fluency development techniques to support student oral fluency development.

The project is to be applied to two groups of level 1 in English courses at Universidad del Atlantico. It will aim to compare the main results and performance in each group after applying different fluency development techniques. The institution works with a specific English material and books from different publishers. In the English course, students work with a texts series called “Interchange,” teaching 16 units in each level, one per week. Each level consists of 10 weekly hours of instruction and a total approximately of 160 hours a semester

As a result, this research is based on the needs found in A1 students at Cursos libres de la Universidad del Atlantico after analyzing and triangulate the results collected by the different instruments applied (observations, questionnaire, interviews, and diagnostic test). These point out the importance for students to be understood in a second language and the lack of fluency in

speaking at the beginner levels. Hence, the main objective of this study is to examine how fluency development progresses in students of beginner level after applying some teaching techniques and evaluate what techniques could be more beneficial for fluency development in starter learners, more specifically this proposal intends to explore what techniques for fluency development can be more effective for A1 students in the context of a Colombian Caribbean outreach EFL program.

Also, it is important to mention that this work will be carried out in two different groups taking classes in the same English level. There is a difference in students' age ranges, which could be a possible constraint due to the different interest of students. That is to say, in one of the groups, we find students between 20 and 23 years old. They are adults who normally come to class after work or when they finish their university classes. On the other hand, the other group is mainly conformed by teenagers whose ages range between 14 and 17, which makes their interest a bit different from the other group.

This paper is divided into 6 chapters: introduction, theoretical framework, content of the proposal, results of piloting or expected results and constraints, bibliography, and appendices.

The Introduction gives us a general overview of the context, reasons for choosing this context, and objectives of this study.

In the Theoretical Framework, we will find the general theoretical background and justification of the project. This section also includes: Key concepts of the research and a discussion about the topic chosen, and an explanation about the intervention.

In the next chapter, the content of the proposal, we will see a description of the main decisions, objectives of the research, and some characteristics of the proposal like methodology strategies, lesson plans, materials to be used, and evaluation of the proposal.

In addition, in the result chapter, we will find the presentation of the needs analysis made with their respective interpretation of each answer of the questions applied in the instrument used, explaining the results of the instruments selected and also a brief reflection about the design and initial piloting of this proposal as well as the constraints during found in the way.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

Each teacher in the classroom has his/her own strategies and techniques to teach. Those strategies are related directly to the specific context of teaching. Each classroom is different and a teacher can find students with different learning needs and learning styles, which requires that teachers have to be updated with diverse methods, strategies and techniques of teaching to become successful in their work. That is why this proposal intends to provide educators with a better understanding of the development of oral fluency in beginner students, and at the same time, it expects to contribute to the improvement of the educational context in general through the implementation of some techniques to help students with their oral fluency development.

Since our work will be focused on the development of fluency during the oral production of English in two groups of level I at Universidad del Atlantico, it is necessary to establish the conceptual parameters that we will use to understand and support the notions of this project. In this paper, we mainly use the theories of speaking and fluency proposed by I.S.P Nation and Jonathan Newton, (2009). In addition, we are going to support our study in the theories of Marianne Celce-Murcia; Donna M. Brinton; and Marguerite Ann Snow about techniques and activities to develop fluency in an EFL classroom, (2014).

In other areas of this work, we use as a point of reference the works of Christine Goh and Anne Burns, (2012) to talk about fluency that is a sub-skill of the speaking ability. Additionally, we are going to refer to the works of Burns and Joyce (1997) on the basics of language and also present some similar studies made by other researchers about the development of oral fluency.

According to Nation and Newton (2009) the learning of a new language implies developing fluency as part of speaking skills, probably we can assume that this skill is one of the main ones to develop to be able to maintain good communication and it allows, in a global sense, for the possibility to express an idea (Burns & Joyce, 1997). According to the process of learning, the first skill to be developed by a language learner is the speaking skill and to foreign language learners, it represents a hard challenge to accomplish. Colombia is no stranger to this situation. The International referent EPI, (English Proficiency Index) by EF, presents this situation in its annual report. According to the last report of EF EPI 2016 ranks Colombia in a very low level. That is why it is essential to implement new techniques and strategies to increase the English levels of the adult students in Colombia.

Speaking could be defined as “an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information” (Burns & Joyce, 1997, P.63). This process is one of the most important challenges in the English learning path and involves the ability to communicate accurately and fluently. More specifically, English learners have to develop three key features of their speaking: fluency, accuracy, and complexity (Goh & Burns, 2012). Each of them implies that the learner must be able to provide feedback, redirect, and rephrase (Burns & Joyce, 1997) to communicate clearly and to express correctly ideas and even to supply a communication need. All of these aspects represent for the English learner the possibility to have a real good proficiency that means that language is used in an effective way.

Out of these features of speaking, fluency, is the focus of this work, considering that “Speaking English fluently is a goal for many learners of English, and also for many English learners of Universidad del Atlantico (see graph 4, Appendix A). Fluency means being able to

communicate your ideas without having to stop and think too much about what you are saying”  
(British Broadcasting Corporation, 2003)

Additionally, Fluency development is important at all levels of proficiency, and even beginners need to become fluent with the few items of language that they know (Nation and Newton, 2009). This aspect is important because students can express themselves following a continuous and rich language pattern. In the teaching of speaking, to get the most possible fluent speech must be one of the principal efforts of the English teachers.

Furthermore, it is important to explain the relation between the two concepts used above, speaking and fluency. Speaking is the main skill; it includes all the levels of oral communication and all the stages of that process. On the other hand, fluency is a sub-skill and implies how easy a foreign language learner can express himself without having to stop to think about words, and experience breakdown in communication. As previously mentioned, speaking as a skill includes fluency as a sub-skill. In a classroom, as teachers, we can develop some aspects of speaking, but not necessarily fluency. That is why it is relevant to create effective techniques to develop fluency in English oral production within a classroom.

The relation between speaking and fluency has been studied by some authors like Dotan-Eliaz, (2008) who state that a good fluency does not mean that a person speaks a language but indicates better communication and transmission of ideas conducing to better proficiency. For example, a student in the different stages of his learning process could develop the necessary vocabulary to communicate in another language. Then, that student is confronted with different scenarios to apply his new vocabulary, and he could get his communications need

fulfilled, but fluency will determine his ability to be clear and to have a good reception by the recipient.

According to the British Council report (2015) about English teaching in Colombia, this argues that the development of speaking implied during some time in the recent history of English teaching the learning of vocabulary separated from the other aspects that we have mentioned above in this paper. Although, there do not seem to be too many research articles about this situation in our context, but studying the existing statistics about proficiency and English learning, we can notice that in general students in our country (Colombia) have low English level, which includes low levels of fluency. We can also analyze the statistics provided by the Education First Organization in 2015 when Colombia reached the 57<sup>th</sup> position in a group of 70 countries after comparing their English level through the results obtained in a standardized test.

The Common European Framework (2001) indicates that a person is fluent when he or she uses the language structures accurately but at the same time concentrates meaning not form. Hartmann and Stork affirm that “a fluent speaker uses correct patterns automatically in a normal conversational speed.” (cited in Murcia et al., 2014) This, means that the main characteristics of a fluent student include speaking without too much hesitation; learners can make some pauses, but not too many and not for too long. For all this, it is relevant that teachers develop appropriate techniques in their classroom to help students achieve a better fluency level.

As we said above, this work will be focused on the implementation of some techniques that are aimed to explore the students' development of oral fluency. This implementation is to be conducted in the particular context of Universidad del Atlantico since the analysis and diagnosis

made to two groups enrolled in the English program at this university demonstrated the necessity of students to talk and be fluent in English to express ideas and also they want to be understood by the recipient. All this with the objective to be competent in their work or study context. (see Appendix A and B for result from initial questionnaire)

In order to achieve the fluency in the speaking skill, we need to know about the different functions or purposes of language and then find effective techniques that can help students of level I of English to speak fluently. Richards.J, (2008) in his research explores different styles and functions of speaking. He underpins three main functions of speaking in human interaction. These functions are known as: talk as interaction; talk as a transaction; talk as performance. Each of these speech functions is quite distinct in terms of form and function and require different teaching activities (Richards, 2008). The first one refers to the use of the speaking through dialog, and it has primarily a social function. Talk as transaction means all the operations of talking to fulfill a need. This is focused on what is said or done since the central target is the message and making oneself understood. And, last but not least, talk as a performance refers to public talk; that is, talk that transmits information in front of an audience. In this, the language is more like writing, language, and form and accuracy is important during the speech act. (Richards, 2008).

Taking into account the speaking function as a reference, this study will center on two functions of speech "talk as interaction and talk as a transaction" due to the level of English proficiency of the target students and to be more assertive at the moment to select the techniques for the intervention, in order to help students to improve the fluency in speaking. From these functions of speaking, this work not only aims to increase the English level of students using



their previous knowledge of English, but, as fundamental, we design some specific activities to develop fluency.

Likewise, when we are talking about fluency, we are talking about “planning and delivery of speech.” In other words, we refer to automatization of speech. For this reason, the techniques and activities to implement should have some specific features to help students to develop fluency in speaking. These techniques and activities must be focused on meaning; they must take into account the previous experiences of students; and they should be challenging for the students; for example, Having limited time and pressure (Nation and Newton, 2009).

Before starting to mention the techniques selected and the authors who support these theories, it is necessary to define what a technique is. According to Darrin, (2015) a technique is “a single activity that comes from a procedure” (párr.4). So we can understand that a technique is a way of doing something by using special knowledge or skill. In other words, techniques in the language classroom are the actions that teachers implement to achieve certain goals.

Taking into account the time and the practicality of a technique in the context where we are developing this classroom research, we are going to implement four different techniques as a first step to explore what techniques can be more beneficial to A1 students and then, determine what are the most effective to improve the fluency level of students in A1.

Consequently, the four techniques selected to facilitate the development of fluency of students of level I are: *fluency circle*, *information gap activities* (to be more specific “*role plays*”), the *4/3/2 technique* and the *storytelling with pictures*. These techniques were selected

taking into account the characteristics of students and the characteristics that one activity should have to focus on fluency.

The *fluency circle* consists of practicing dialogue in an active way; the goal of this technique is to internalize and learn some useful structures and expressions to communicate in a second language in a fluent way. Students receive pre-established dialogues by the teacher, and then they organize themselves in a circle with an inner and an outer part. The students in the inner part of the circle will play the role of the A character of the dialogue, and the students in the outer part of the circle will play the role of the B character of the dialogue. After the completion of the dialogue, students with the B character will move to the left and the students in the inner part will not move. After this the teacher stops the activity, and they will try to say the dialogue just looking at their partner when they speak. After this, the students will try to personalize the dialogue using a similar conversation (Celce-murcia et al., 2014).

The purpose of this technique is to make students practice many times the same dialogue and, in this way, help them develop better fluency rehearsing and repeating structures and expressions until they can recreate or use them differently by adding or changing different information from that initially provided.

The second technique is called *Information Gap*: the specific activity is role play. In this, one student has the information that another does not have. In this process, they negotiate meaning to complete the whole information or scene. In this technique, the teacher provides students with some cards indicating the specific role and information related to a character. They have to perform the role using their previous knowledge and using the information written in

the cards to complete the information requested for one of the characters. After that, students select another card and change the role to start again (Celce-murcia et al., 2014).

The *4/3/2* is another useful technique to develop fluency, and it is focused on the message of the topic. This takes into account the quantity of production. The teacher selects a topic on the basis of students likes so such topic is of their interest. Then the students have to talk about this topic for around 4 minutes. After that, students deliver the same topic, but the time is reduced to 3 and then 2 minutes. In this activity, students have control over the language and quantity of production. The purpose of this technique is to increase the rate of production using the time as pressure. (Nation & Newton, 2009).

Last but not least, the *storytelling with pictures*, which consists of creating a story from some pictures presented in class. In this activity, the teacher divides the class into groups of four students and then he or she provides them with some different pictures. Each student has to pick one picture from the file and start to create a story. One student of the group takes notes. The teacher sets a time limit to finish the story. At the end, each group tells the complete story created. This technique has the purpose to make students think and talk as fast as they can, using the vocabulary and expressions learned in classes. (Bailey & Savage, 1994).

These techniques we have mentioned will be applied during this project in two different groups of English level I. It is important to say that two techniques will be implemented in A group and the others in B group. These selections were made taking into account the characteristics of students, the ages, and also the nature of the techniques, we will talk about this organization in depth and the characteristic of these techniques in the proposal chapter.

There are many techniques that we can use in a global context in both described groups,

each technique is the result of an independent research and different experiences obtained in many classrooms around the world. For example we can mention one of the works of David Paige, (2011) where we can learn that the choral reading could help to improve the fluency. To use this strategy, according to Paige, we need to make a good text selection to assure the repetition of it with a corrective feedback. This study has similarities with some of the techniques that were selected for this research (storytelling, fluency circle), since these techniques use the repetition of structures and expressions to strengthen the development of fluency in English.

Other work related to the above mentioned is the research of Norman Segalowttz, (2007) on the speaking fluency and the acquisition of fluency in a second language. In this study, we realize that the development of high levels of access fluidity and attention control through the exposure and practice of a language in a real communicative situation are very important to speak English. In addition self confidence it is also relevant to develop a good level of fluency as Monserrat, (2006) mentioned in the research carried out in the Illinois State University, where the oral Journal as a technique was applied to improve the fluency level of students. The results also were very significant since students gained self confidence when they experienced how much they are able to say without hesitations in a second language.

There are some previous studies related to this topic “fluency” that support the idea that the development of new strategies to complement a continuous enriched vocabulary with good fluency has been a challenge for teachers. (The British Council report, 2015). That is why studies made by many researchers underpin the importance of fluency during the learning of a second language. Mora and Valls-Ferrer (2012) pointed out that fluency development is one of the main goals of formal language instructions, but sometimes the development of fluency is not successful due to the lack of exposure to the language. That is why, the contents and techniques

to help to develop fluency must provide enough practice and exposure to the students to the real language.

To provide the students enough opportunities to practice what they have learned is essential in order to improve fluency in speaking. According to the inquiry made by Naoko Taguchi and Yasufumi Iwasaki, (2008) when they compared the results of the two groups after make an intervention in one of them. The intervention consisted of using repetitive instructions of language chunks in classrooms as a part of a discourse unit. The results after it, showed that the group that received language chunks instructions was significantly more productive than the other, more fluently at the discourse level in some aspects like speech rate and pause length.

The studies mentioned contribute to understanding why fluency is an essential sub-skill to have a good communication in English. These studies also constitute a reference point to continue this proposal and it is also as a foundation for all the activities that we will perform during the intervention in the two groups selected to carry out the initial piloting of this classroom action research project.

### **3. The content of the proposal**

According to McKeachie, (1999) Classroom Action Research is a method of finding out what works best in your own classroom in order to improve the students' learning. Classroom research involves reflecting systematically about the learning and teaching process within our classroom, assessing student understanding and comparing the student learning outcomes through the use of different teaching strategies, techniques and methods that can provide learners and teachers a better understanding of their own practice (Kaur, 2012).

Classroom action research is a process where teachers reflect on their own practice and identify the main aspects that do not allow the successful learning of students and he/she tries to help students overcome their learning problems or find a solution. Mertler, (2009) defines action research as “any systematic inquiry conducted by teachers”p.(4). The main characteristic of this research is that is done by teachers for themselves. This allows them to study about issues related to their own instructional methods, students, their own assessments with the main objective to understand them and improve their quality. Usually during this kind of research, teachers connect theory with the practice and take some actions to increase the utility of effectiveness of the strategies, instruments, methods or techniques applied to know what are more beneficial in a classroom.

Until this point, it is necessary to mention that Classroom action research belongs to qualitative research, which implies that this proposal will have some specific features, since qualitative research has its own nature. Creswell (2003) defines qualitative research as “an

inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem” (p.9). This means that it seeks to understand a research problem from the perspective of the local population it involves.

Denzin and Lincoln (as cited by Klenke, 2008) state that qualitative research is: “a multi-method in focus, involving and interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter” (p.12).”

Therefore, this type of research studies human issues in a natural setting and tries to describe a phenomenon using diverse empirical materials and instruments to collect valuable information to continue the research process.

According to Hays and Singh, (2012) qualitative research refers to “how participants create and give meaning to the social experience.” (p.4). So, this research takes place in a natural setting and gives importance to the understanding of the reality and the ability to collect and interpret data fully. It relies on participants and researcher. Therefore, this study establishes a relation between the situational constraint and the opportunities of this design to acquire a better understanding of our context.

In addition, there are some characteristics of this classroom research that frame it within qualitative research. These features are: firstly, this proposal has an objective that seeks to address and explore a problematic issue in students' learning, proposes the use of a predefined set of procedures to answer reach its objective, collects initial evidence using different instruments; additionally, the proposal is expected to lead to produce findings that were not determined in advance, and this will produce findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study (Klenke, 2008). That is why, this project makes part of a

qualitative research approach.

Undoubtedly, each classroom is different and every teaching situation is unique in terms of content, proficiency level, skills and learning styles of students as well as teachers' skills, teachers' styles, and other factors that we can find in a specific context. For this reason, it is necessary that teachers dedicate quality time and systematic thought to find out what works best using diverse instruments to collect valuable data. Qualitative research offers many methods for collecting data, like interviews, observations, documents, archival data, etc. (Hays and Singh, 2012).

Taking into account that this proposal is framed within a classroom action research, we have applied some instruments to collect enough information and identify the main problem that guided some of the decisions made for this proposal.

### **Need Analysis**

During the definition of the focus of this work, we have implemented the following instruments to gather important information that contributed to understanding the problem. These instruments were selected taking into account the nature of the study and the main objective.

In order to gather data, this study designed and used observation technique, questionnaires, interviews, and some recordings to contribute a better understanding of the context.

The observation technique is a useful tool to gather reliable information about what really happens in the classroom in terms of methodology, students' learning and teacher's instructions and the way they interact in the classroom. Observing is so much more than watching or looking



at something, according to Hays and Singh (2012). Observe “is training yourself to focus on relevant participant and setting characteristics and behaviors and examining these as you have never before” p. (224). Therefore, this instrument makes an important part during this study since it provides a better understanding of the context, and this tool implies more present moments where a researcher can gather setting details instead of relying on other’s conclusions and opinions. Hays & Singh, (2012).

Another significant instrument used was the questionnaire applied to each group of level I, as a way to identify the learning needs and students' needs. (see appendix B and C ). This instrument consists of formulating a systematic set of written questions related to a hypothesis or research variable (Ñaupas, Mejia, Novoa y Villagomez, 2014). In this case the questions were related to the English educational context (methodology, learning style, English skills, and students’ preferences). The purpose of this instrument is to collect information to check the focus of our work (Ñaupas et al., 2014).

According to Holly and Whitehead, (1986) Questionnaire is a very practical instrument for research with limited amount of time and this allows for researchers to ask specific information to specific participants. It also permits to classify the information. The most important aspect of questionnaires is that they are easy and fast to do. It is also a convenient way to collect information from the students, allowing the prompt classification and interpretation of the information. Additionally, it is not stressful for the students to answer, for that reason a questionnaire was selected as an instrument to apply during the need analysis.

To have enough information to support our study and the decisions made at the beginning and during the research, we also implemented the interview as an instrument to complement the

data collected. Ñaupas, et al.(2014) state that “the interview is a kind of formal conversation between the researcher and the investigated, which consists of asking questions verbally in order to obtain answers or information and to verify the hypothesis made”(p. 219). After we made the questionnaire to students, this project carried out an individual interview with the coordinator and academic assistant of Universidad del Atlantico to triangulate this information and made conclusions about the study.

It is important to mention that this instrument allows the participant to express what is significant and relevant using their own words and also could be less expensive than other data collection methods. This is a practical instrument that allows the evaluator to probe for more details of the study. (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Finally, after analyzing the results compiled through the instruments implemented, this inquiry determined to apply an entrance and an exit test to check the progress of students during the interventions selected. It is important to highlight that these tests were made orally; therefore, it was necessary to use a digital audio recorder to capture each detail of the students' answer, then analyze and compare the recording to notice the fluency progress of students during and after the intervention.

To evaluate the fluency of the students' answer was necessary to create a rubric with the features contained in the category of the sub-skill “Fluency”. (See appendix C, Fluency rubric).

In the next section, we are going to find more about the results obtained during the implementation of the instruments described above.

### **Needs analysis results**

After applying the instruments selected (interview, questionnaire, observation, recording, entrance and exit test), was necessary to analyze and examined the information gathered, in order to triangulate this information obtained through the instruments, to make conclusions and make decisions to guide this study.

According to the answer provided by the Coordinator and academic assistant during the interview applied (see appendix A), they said that the University works with a Communicative approach to language teaching, which implies that students should be able to interact and communicate ideas in different situations. The British Council states that “The communicative approach is based on the idea that learning language successfully comes through having to communicate real meaning. When learners are involved in real communication”(British Council, 2006), it means that Communicative competence refers to a learner's ability to use language to communicate successfully.

As we have mentioned, for this institution, it is relevant that students can talk and interact in different contexts using the English language to communicate ideas. In addition, The results obtained through the questionnaire indicated that most of students of level I, are aware of the importance to learn English to have better opportunities in their life. Also, they recognize that speaking is one of skill where they present more difficulties (see appendix B). So, they think that speaking is a fundamental skill to improve their life and to have a good job in their future. (See appendix A and B).

During this process, we also gathered reliable information through the observation

technique, which provides us data about what happens inside the classroom about the learners, teacher, methodology, and the way as they interact and respond in the teaching and learning process. It is important to mention that the observation technique was constant during the whole study, so we observed the students before and after the intervention.

Moreover, during the observation made at the beginning of the study in some activities in classes, students showed to have some knowledge about English. They know grammar structures and vocabulary, but when they are going to express ideas or interact in short conversations, they presented some difficulties, and their speech sounds unnatural.

Furthermore, in the observation made in both groups, it was notorious that students present a lot of difficulties to use English expressions that they already know, when they are going to use it in real contexts. It was also noticeable that their English does not sound natural and when they express ideas, they use inappropriate pauses and the speech rate is too slow. This makes message confusing and sometimes the recipient cannot understand the messages.

Finally, one of the important reasons why students said that they took this English course is because they want to communicate ideas and they want to be understood by others in a second language, they also want to speak without spending a lot time to think before to say their ideas in English. Regarding this, for Universidad del Atlantico, it is also important that students in the beginner courses can express ideas and they can communicate according to their English level in a fluent way.

Consequently, after analyzing and making the triangulation of the data collected through the different instruments used to define the initial study, (interview, questionnaire and observation), we found that all these outcomes pointed out that the low level of fluency in

speaking is one of the main factors that does not allow students to have a successful English communication. It also causes that the message sent by students is not understood by others since students think too much to express ideas and they make inappropriate pauses to use structures that they already know from the previous English courses at middle school and high school level. Thus, this project explores the oral fluency development through the implementation of some techniques to determine what can work best to improve the fluency skill in students of level I at Universidad del Atlantico.

Taking into account, these conclusions made through the initial results gathered from the instruments applied during the needs analysis, the objective of this action classroom research was defined, to contribute to students' development of speaking, to be more specific, to improve fluency skill.

## **PROPOSAL**

This classroom research has the purpose to *explore the effectiveness of fluency development techniques in the context of a population of A1 students in a Colombian Caribbean outreach EFL program.*

## **GENERAL OBJECTIVE**

To determine the effectiveness of fluency development techniques in the context of a population of A2 students in a Colombian Caribbean outreach EFL program.

## **ESPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- To Implement techniques for fluency development and evaluate students' fluency development based on each technique.

- Compare which of the following techniques contribute to a better development of fluency in level I of Universidad Del Atlántico: Information Gap: role play, fluency circle, 4/3/2 technique, and storytelling with pictures.

### **Details of the proposal**

This study is designed to contribute to the application of specific techniques to develop fluency in the English classroom. This research highlights the importance of the development of fluency in beginner students, as an essential aspect to get a successful English communication.

Another relevant purpose is to explore the grade of effectiveness of different techniques to improve the fluency level in elementary English learners.

To implement this study it is necessary to develop a methodology following several steps that could help optimize application of the study. These steps are:

- Make a need analysis of the population sample selected, to determinate the main factors that affect the teaching and learning through the application of different instruments. (Observation, interviews and questionnaire).
- To define focus and the objectives that guide the study.
- To make a diagnosis to verify the fluency level of each group through the application of an entrance test.
- To define the techniques to use in each group.
- To establish the way to make the intervention. (Topics, contents, techniques, time)
- Monitor the students' progress through the observation and recordings.
- Evaluation of the students' fluency progress, through the application of an exit test.

- Comparison of the progress of both groups to determinate what techniques were more effective to develop fluency in beginner students.
- General conclusions and analysis of the results.
- Make suggestions for future research about this topic or implementation of these techniques.

It is pivotal to highlight that for carrying out this research it is needed to know in a meticulous way the curriculum and the academic program of students where the project is going to be applied; since any intervention should be related with the institutional vision and goals. In addition, the techniques selected for this study also required to be related to the program of the students in term of contents and chosen topics. It is advisable to choose topics of interest of the group to motivate them to participate during the application of the techniques.

To verify the efficiency of this proposal, we take a sample population from Universidad del Atlántico to make a piloting of this proposed intervention. The following pages describe the intervention made in Universidad del Atlántico.

#### 4. Piloting of the proposal

The intervention was carried out in two groups of level I of Universidad del Atlántico. This intervention was aimed to take place during the English classes using diverse techniques to help students to improve their fluency in speaking, and it needed to be conducted after students had learned the grammar structures, vocabulary, and expressions related to the unit of the book (interchange intro). In this way, for a period of four months, the piloting was carried out within Universidad del Atlántico. To be more exact, the intervention in both groups was done in two months. During this process the teacher evaluated the contents of the units taught, but, at the same time helped the students to be fluent using the knowledge that they had acquired. Before starting the intervention, it was necessary to make an entrance test to know the fluency level of students, these answers were recorded.

To evaluate the students' performance during the test, we elaborated a rubric with the main characteristic of fluency skill. The relevant features that we took into account are: rate of speech and filler words. (See appendix D, fluency rubric ).

The features established in the fluency rubric were taken as a reference to evaluate the students' answer. The questions to evaluate the level fluency of students had a low level of complexity and these are within the range of knowledge that one learner of the English language should know at A1 level, this is according to the Common European Framework, (2001). (See Appendix E, entrance test).

Fluency involves the processing of use the language in real time. According to Nation & Newton, (2009) a student shows fluency when he or she takes part in a meaning focused activity. Therefore, the techniques and activities developed during this proposal should be focused on the



meaning and not in form. Furthermore, taking into account all the features of the students (learning needs, interest, and ages of each group) the organization of the teaching techniques selected for both groups were as follows:

**Group A:** (Students aged between 15 and 19)

Information *gap: role play* and *fluency circle* were implemented in this group. These techniques are controlled due to the ages of students, behavior, and also because they are more teacher-dependent. These techniques are appropriate because they may help the teacher with classroom management.

For the *role play technique*, the teacher provided students with some cards describing a specific role and information related to one character. They had to perform the role using their previous knowledge learned during the week and using the information written on the cards to complete the information requested for one of the characters. After that, the students selected another card and changed the role to start again.

The second technique implemented in this group was the *fluency circle*, where students were organized in a circle with an inner and an outer part. The teacher provided them with a pre-established dialogue. The students in the inner part of the circle played the role of the A character of the dialogue and the students in the outer part of the circle played the role B of the dialogue. After the completion of the dialogue, students in the outer circle moved to the left and repeated again the same conversation over and over. At the end of the activity, they tried to say the dialogue just looking at their partner when they spoke. And then, students tried to personalize the dialogue using a similar conversation.

**Group B:** (students aged between 22 and 25)

In the second group, the 4/3/2 techniques and the *storytelling* with pictures were applied. These techniques are less controlled and were selected for this group because most students have certain knowledge of English and they are able to express complete ideas and phrases; they are more independent class, and they demonstrate more adequate classroom behavior.

To use the first technique time was modified since students were in the beginner level, and they were in the first semester of English courses. So, in this case, the technique was called 3/2/1. The teacher selected a likely interesting topic for the class; then, students had to talk about this topic for around 3 minutes. After that, students spoke about the same topic, but time was less. The time was reduced to 1 minute. The purpose of this technique is to increase the rate of production using time as pressure. (Nation & Newton, 2009).

The second technique used in this group, was the *storytelling with pictures* provided by the teacher. Sometimes, students worked in groups of 4. They created a short story using the structures and vocabulary related to the topic of the week. Each student of the group took a picture, and as fast as they could, they expressed a sentence related to the image in order to create the story. The teacher sets the time limit and, at the end of the activity the students made the corrections, and they told again the story. This last activity was modified after three weeks have passed. The teacher increased the difficulty of the technique each week to make the activity more challenging for students.

This intervention was carried out for eight (8) weeks, on Fridays. The topics were selected taking into account the material established for English courses at Universidad del Atlántico

(interchange fourth edition intro).

The implementation of these techniques was done in an interlined way in each group to avoid monotony. The project was implemented at the same time in both groups to make an analysis during the intervention and keep records on the progress or advancement of these groups in the fluency of speaking. After this, a comparison was made to establish the differences found in the implementation of the techniques in the two groups. Then, some reflection and conclusions were made about the possible effectiveness of the use of these techniques for the development of fluency.

The following chart shows the organization of the intervention made by each group and the topics selected for every week.

**Table 1**  
***Organization of contents and techniques used in Group A***

DATES	TOPICS / UNIT	GRAMMARSTRUCTURES	VOCABULARY	TECHNIQUES TO BE USED
October 7 <sup>th</sup>	What do you do?	Simple present Wh-questions (asking for and giving information about jobs) Placement of adjectives after be and before nouns	Jobs /occupations Workday routines Workplaces	Information Gap: Role play
October 14 <sup>th</sup>	What sports do you play?	Simple present / wh-questions Can for ability Yes/ no wh-questions with can)	Free time activities Sports Abilities and talents	Fluency circle
October 21 <sup>th</sup>	What are you going to do?	The future be going to Yes / no questions with be going to	Plans Months / dates, Holidays, festivals and special days Future time expressions	Information Gap: Role play
October 28 <sup>th</sup>	What's the matter?	Imperatives Have + noun Feel + adjectives	Health problems Medications and advices Parts of the body Negative and positive adjectives	Fluency circle
November 4 <sup>th</sup>	You can't miss it.	Prepositions of place Directions with imperative form	Store and things to buy there. Tourist attractions.	Information Gap: Role play
November 11 <sup>th</sup>	Did you have fun?	Simple past tense Regular and irregular verbs Yes / no questions and short answers.	Weekends, chores and fun activities. Vacations / summer activities	Fluency circle
November 18 <sup>th</sup>	Where did you grow up?	Past of be Past tense / wh- questions	Biographical information (place of birth) Years/ school days	Information Gap: Role play
November 25 <sup>th</sup>	Can she call you later?	Subject and object pronouns Prepositional phrases. Invitations with do you want to...? Would you like to...? Verb + to	Locations Invitations / going out with friends	Fluency circle

**Table 2**  
***Organization of contents and techniques used in group B***

<b>DATES</b>	<b>TOPICS / UNIT</b>	<b>GRAMMARSTRUCTURES</b>	<b>VOCABULARY</b>	<b>TECHNIQUES TO BE USED</b>
October 7 <sup>th</sup>	What do you do?	Simple present Wh-questions (asking for and giving information about jobs) Placement of adjectives after be and before nouns	Jobs /occupations Workday routines Workplaces	3/2/1 technique
October 14 <sup>th</sup>	What sports do you play?	Simple present / wh-questions Can for ability Yes/ no wh-questions with can)	Free time activities Sports Abilities and talents	Storytelling
October 21 <sup>th</sup>	What are you going to do?	The future be going to Yes / no questions with be going to	Plans Months / dates, Holidays, festivals and special days Future time expressions	3/2/1 technique
October 28 <sup>th</sup>	What's the matter?	Imperatives Have + noun Feel + adjectives	Health problems Medications and advices Parts of the body Negative and positive adjectives	Storytelling
November 4 <sup>th</sup>	You can't miss it.	Prepositions of place Directions with imperative form	Store and things to buy there. Tourist attractions.	3/2/1 technique
November 11 <sup>th</sup>	Did you have fun?	Simple past tense Regular and irregular verbs Yes / no questions and short answers.	Weekends, chores and fun activities. Vacations / summer activities	Storytelling
November 18 <sup>th</sup>	Where did you grow up?	Past of be Past tense / wh- questions	Biographical information (place of birth) Years/ school days	3/2/1 technique
November 25 <sup>th</sup>	Can she call you later?	Subject and object pronouns Prepositional phrases. Invitations with do you want to...? Would you like to...? Verb + to	Locations Invitations / going out with friends	Storytelling

This part of the proposal chapter shows examples of the information provided by the teacher during the techniques applied in the classrooms. This information corresponds to the topics and contents used during the development of each unit and techniques. As presented in the charts 1 and 2, each technique was related to the topic of the unit.

## **GROUP A**

### **TECHNIQUE:** Role plays

The class was divided in two parts (10 students /10 students). Some cards contained punctual information just to create a character within a specific situation and context using the information on the card. The expressions or language chunks that students needed to perform the activity were taught during the week, before applying the technique. (To see more example go to Appendix F)

Example 1:

### **TOPIC:** what do you do? (Jobs / Occupations)

<b>STUDENT A</b>	<b>STUDENT B</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You have an interesting job</li> <li>✓ You have children</li> <li>✓ You are divorced</li> <li>✓ You have a degree</li> <li>✓ You work with teenagers</li> <li>✓ You go cycling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You are coordinator of an important institution.</li> <li>✓ You want to know more about your employees.</li> </ul>

**TECHNIQUE: Fluency Circle**

As we have explained above, in this technique, students were sitting in two circles with an inner and outer part. Students practiced two different dialogues per unit. These dialogues were taken from the material used by the University (interchange fourth edition). The conversations contain some important structures and vocabulary learned during the unit. The underlined words or sentences are the information that students will replace for another one.

The following is an example of the conversations provided to students. (To see more examples go to appendix F )

Example 2:

**TOPIC: What sports do you play?****Conversations # 1**

<p><b>Lauren:</b> So, Justin, what do you do in your free time?</p> <p><b>Justin:</b> Well, I love sports.</p> <p><b>Lauren:</b> Really? What sports do you like?</p> <p><b>Justin:</b> My favorites are hockey, baseball, and soccer.</p> <p><b>Lauren:</b> Wow, you're a really good athlete! When do you play all these sports?</p> <p><b>Justin:</b> Oh, I don't play these sports.</p> <p><b>Lauren:</b> What do you mean?</p> <p><b>Justin:</b> I just watch them on TV!</p>	<p><b>Kayla:</b> Oh, Look. There's a talent contest on Saturday. Let's enter.</p> <p><b>Philip:</b> I can't enter a talent contest. What can I do?</p> <p><b>Kayla:</b> You can sing really well.</p> <p><b>Philip:</b> Oh, thanks..... Well, you can, too.</p> <p><b>Kayla:</b> Oh, no. I can't sing at all, but I can play the piano.</p> <p><b>Philip:</b> So, maybe we can enter the contest.</p> <p><b>Kayla:</b> Sure. Why not?</p> <p><b>Philip:</b> Ok, let's practice tomorrow!</p>
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**GROUP B****TECHNIQUE: 3/2/1**

As it was mentioned before , this technique consists of reducing the time to speak in order to increase the speech speed. Students worked in pairs with one acting as the speaker and

the other as the listener. The teacher assigned a specific topic related to the unit of the week and students should talk about this topic first for 3 minutes then 2 and finally 1 minute. Students changed the pairs. Each speaker gave the same information to a new partner. The topics selected were:

- The perfect job
- Unusual jobs
- My dream holidays
- The next birthday
- A tourist in Barranquilla
- My neighborhood
- The worst day of my life
- The best day of my life

### **TECHNIQUE:** Storytelling

Students were divided into groups of five; they started to create a short story using the pictures that the teacher gave them. The pictures were shown in a ppt presentation. At the beginning of this technique students had two minutes to think about a sentence related to the picture in order to start the story. After many weeks, students did not have time to think too much, they just had to say the sentence taking as reference the pictures presented by the teacher. Sometimes the activity was done individually.

These are some example of the first pictures presented to the class to create the story. (To see more go to Appendix F)



TOPIC: What sports do you play?



## **Results of piloting**

The proposal presented in this work was piloted and some initial results were obtained. The piloting consisted of an intervention in which the fluency development techniques were applied to two groups of students. During the intervention made in both groups using the techniques selected (fluency circle, role plays, storytelling, 3/2/1), the teacher kept observing each group. She used her own teaching journal to take some notes and write students' behavior and progress during and after the techniques applied. Also the teacher recorded some videos while students were performing the technique.

Before presenting the results obtained from the entrance and exit test to compare the fluency progress of students, it is important to highlight some changes in the learners' behaviors, without excluding other aspects and reactions of students during the intervention. That is why; the reactions of students to each technique were categorized in terms of: fluency, perceived motivation, and participation. These are factors that influenced the class and the learning of students. On the following pages, there is a brief description of the students' reactions during the implementation of each technique in term of fluency, perceived motivation, and participation.

### Group A:

**Fluency circle:** During the first weeks of implementation of this technique, the students were motivated and it seems that to be in movement and change their positions during this technique encouraged them to have an active participation during this activity. After 4 weeks, the students began to substitute information from assigned dialogues; which caused them more effort and time. However, it was noticed that in each week the time they took to return to the initial place of the circle was less, which indicated that the rate speech increased. Another important aspect was the sentences and phrases used to replace the information of the dialogues started to be more complete, assertive, and coherent. Each week the use of vocabulary and the rate of speech seemed to improve.

Table 3

*Categorization of results from fluency circle technique*

Fluency	Perceived motivation	Participation.
Students fluency level increase each week, and also the pronunciation of some phrases and words improved in the majority of students	Students appeared motivated and sometimes they were worried when they had to replace some words or phrases, however, they were interested during the application of the technique.	The participation during the activity was successful. Learners participated actively. They enjoyed the class

**Role Play:** Each week the students, showed interest and motivation when they were performing a role play. They participated actively, waiting to know what role they were going to perform. The first weeks they were a little worried and it was difficult for them to make complete and fluent sentences. However, after 5 weeks, students changed and started to use more complete structures and phrases when they were performing the assigned character. In addition, the

students began to be more fluid at the moment to speak, which was notorious in the recordings made.

Table 4.

*Categorization of results from role plays technique*

Fluency	Perceived motivation	Participation.
The improvement of fluency level of students was notorious when they spoke. Also, there was progress observed in the intonation and pronunciation of words and phrases.	Students seemed motivated. They enjoyed each performance. And they expressed their enthusiasm during the presentation.	Students participated actively during the performance.

**Group B**

**3/2/1 technique:** The students presented some difficulties to perform this activity during the classes, even after having learned the vocabulary and phrases related to the topic that they had to speak. Many of them did not manage to talk with the time set, and others just said they did not what to say. Another limitation found was that the students who listened to their classmates said that they did not understand what they said. After 6 weeks there was a little change in some students since some students started to take longer time. However, the majority of learners could not reach the maximum time established (3 minutes of speech production), maybe this happened because this is a free technique in which students do not receive any pre-establish dialogue or structure, instead, they have to create the monologue and use their imagination to talk about the topic. Therefore, it was noticed that fluency did not have a significant progress in the students after applying this technique.

Table 5

*Categorization of results from 3/2/1 technique*

<b>Fluency</b>	<b>Perceived motivation</b>	<b>Participation</b>
There was no advancement in the fluency level of students. The activity did not seem successful because students stopped talking before the time limit.	Students did not appear motivated to participate during the activity because this required them a lot of effort from them. Sometimes they seemed to be worried to participate and also frustrated because they did not reach the maximum time established to speak	The voluntary participation during this technique was not significant since the students did not seem to like it. And some students gave up and they stopped to speak before time limit.

**Storytelling technique:** During the development of this technique students appeared motivated because they had to create sentences looking at some pictures that teacher presented. It was a nice experience to see how the students enjoyed the classes and also how they used their creativity to create the story. At the beginning of the implementation of this technique, students were nervous to participate and they were scared to make mistakes at the moment to talk. However, they seemed to be motivated and interested during the activity. After 5 weeks passed, the time to think and create the sentence to make the story it decreased. Students were more confident and they were little more fluent than the beginning, to express their ideas.

Table 6

*Categorization of results from storytelling technique*

<b>Fluency</b>	<b>Perceived motivation</b>	<b>Participation</b>
There was a little progress in the fluency of learners, more specifically in the filler word category. Students reduced some hesitation at the moment to speak and create the story.	Students enjoyed the activity. The pictures motivated them to be attentive. They seemed to be anxious to see the next image to continue the activity.	Learner participated actively. They were engaged during the development of the technique.

After seeing a detailed description about the students' progress in terms of fluency, motivation perceived and participation, the following pages present the results obtained from the entrance and exit test in order to do an analysis about the students' fluency progress and also, make a general conclusion to know what techniques were more effective in both groups according to the results gathered.

The following charts present the results obtained by students in Group A and B during the entrance exam. The Fluency level is measured according to the number of the grade established in fluency rubric. Taking into account this rubric number 1 means **Poor**, 2 is **Good** and 3 is **Excellent**. (See appendix D, fluency rubric)

Table 7. *Results from the entrance exam*

Entrance Exam - Group A		Entrance Exam - Group B	
Students	Grade	Students	Grade
1	1	1	1
2	1	2	1
3	1	3	1
4	1	4	1
5	2	5	1
6	1	6	1
7	2	7	1
8	1	8	1
9	1	9	1
10	1	10	1
11	1	11	1
12	1	12	2
13	1	13	1
14	2	14	1
15	1	15	1
16	1	16	1
17	1	17	1
18	1	18	1
19	1	19	1
20	1	20	1

As we can observe in the table above the majority of the students in both groups present a lower level of fluency when they speak. The results obtained just evaluate the rate of production and filler words during their answers. It is necessary to clarify that the questions made to students were easy to understand and they should know how to answer.

Furthermore, we can notice that in group A there are three students that can express their ideas more fluently than others. This might be because some of them are still in the high school where they take an English class as a mandatory subject, and also because they have more time to practice and be exposed of the English language because they usually listen to English music, watching English TV series and they spend a lot of time in social networks. However, despite this exposure to language, more of the 80% of students in group A have a grade 1 according to

the rubric made to evaluate the fluency in speaking. (See appendix D)

On the other hand, we can find the initial outcomes obtained by group B during the entrance exam. According to the chart, this group also presents a lower level of fluency. It is noticeable in the chart that just one learner of the group B has an acceptable level of fluency to speak. In addition, it is important to mention that learners in this group work all the day and others study a professional career and they come every day at night to the University after finishing their work schedule. This situation might be a constraint or limit in the learning process, due to the fact that they come to class sometimes tired and also they have less time to be exposed to the English language and the time to practice the expressions and vocabulary learned during the week is not enough.

The next charts present the results obtained by students in Group A and B during the exit exam. The Fluency level is measured according to the number of the grade established in fluency rubric. Taking into account this rubric number 1 means **Poor**, 2 is **Good** and 3 is **Excellent**. (See appendix D).



Table 8. *Results from the exit exam*

Entrance Exam - Group A		Entrance Exam - Group B	
Students	Grade	Students	Grade
1	2	1	2
2	1	2	1
3	2	3	1
4	1	4	2
5	3	5	1
6	2	6	1
7	3	7	1
8	2	8	2
9	1	9	1
10	2	10	1
11	2	11	1
12	2	12	2
13	1	13	1
14	3	14	1
15	1	15	1
16	2	16	2
17	1	17	1
18	1	18	1
19	2	19	2
20	2	20	1

According to the Table 8, students in group A presented progress in the development of fluency, since more than 60% of students have 2 in the grade of the exit test, which means a good level of fluency, nevertheless, they presented some hesitation and filler words but this did not affect communication. (See appendix D).

As we can notice in table 10, students of group A presented a good level of fluency after the intervention. In addition, students that started in grade 2 advanced to grade 3 according to the rubric chart made to evaluate the students' fluency. This means that the two techniques used in this group were effective to improve the fluency level of the students. These techniques used

were fluency circle and role plays. It is also remarkable there was a significant and a good reaction of learners in term of motivation and participation. (See table 3).

On the other hand, the results obtained in the exit test by group B after the intervention made were not too significant in the fluency development, since less than 40% of students did not present any change in the grade. According to the table 8 just 6 students presented progress in the fluency development and 14 students kept the same grade.

It is noticeable that the techniques applied in this group were less effective than the others, since there was not relevant change in the fluency grade, and also students were not motivated to participate in 3/2/1 technique. Although it was applied for eight weeks, students seemed to be frustrated because they did not reach the time established of oral production. (See table 5).

However, it is important to highlight that students in group B were motivated to participate during the implementation of the storytelling technique and there was a little improvement in the fluency level after weeks passed. This was reflected in the utterances made by students when they were asked the questions.

## **Conclusion**

After making this initial intervention as piloting experience to explore what techniques are more effective to develop fluency in elementary English students there are some important aspects to conclude.

Firstly, we can say that those techniques that imply an active interaction, audio visual contents and repetitive patterns of language could be more effective than those who only use an individual focus (i.e. Surveys, tests, questionnaires, oral presentations etc), since students develop more concentration to face challenges and to solve problems when they find that more people are involved and when they are involved in a social environment because this environment influences the content perception. As we know, to learn is a social aspect, so for the techniques that implied an individual work, the results were not so satisfactory. From the experience here presented (in this particular context), the most useful techniques are those that implement a funny and a social aspect. These elements are reflected in motivation and participation of our research and also in the fluency development at the moment to express ideas.

When this research started, we expected to find the best strategy to apply and help the students to improve their fluency level through the different contents of the English program, but we can say that there is not any standardized technique to improve the fluency level in a global way. But we can identify the aspects that can make a technique to be successful.

It is relevant to mention for future implementation of this study that the most effective techniques were developed or adapted to each specific group that made part of our research. To standardize a technique is a mistake that the teachers tend to make in the classrooms. Each group

has maybe not only one, but many different perceptions or even understanding of each content. That is why it is pivotal to make a need analysis before implementing any strategy or technique in our classroom.

However, in the results obtained in this study, it was remarkable that one of the techniques that worked better to develop fluency was "Fluency circle" because students learned to automatize some expressions used in the English language due to the constant repetition of language chunks. This repetition helped them to memorize language structures and phrases that contributed to a better oral production of English; also this technique was successful in term of motivation and participation because students were engaged during the performing.

The second technique with good result was the role play technique. In this case the students must developed a role in order to respond to a need or situation provided by the teacher in one card. This was successful because students were interested every week to know what role they were going to perform the next week. The participation was active and better in term of fluency during each section

Finally, both techniques were very useful for us, but we cannot recommend it for every single group in the world because there are not standardized techniques with predetermined results for all the students.

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## **6. Appendix A**

### **INTERVIEW TO PROGRAM COORDINATOR**

**This interview was made to the Program Coordinator at Universidad del Atlántico in order to collect data to make some decisions for the research to be conducted.**

1. ¿Para qué necesitan Los estudiantes de la UA el inglés?
2. ¿Por qué cree usted que se estudia ingles en la UA?
3. ¿Qué se hace necesario para que se mejoren los procesos de Enseñanza aprendizaje en la UA?
4. ¿Qué meta del programa de inglés se alcanza/se logra de manera más efectiva de acuerdo con los resultados académicos de la UA (pruebas internacionales)?
5. ¿Qué habilidad cree usted que se debe enfatizar más en los estudiantes de los cursos libres de la UA?
6. ¿Cómo cree usted que debería ser la enseñanza del inglés en esta institución?
7. ¿Sobre qué tema cree usted que prefieren leer o hablar los estudiantes en inglés?
8. ¿Cómo considera el uso de un texto guía en esta Institucion?
9. ¿Qué tipo de material o recursos didácticos cree que prefieren los estudiantes durante las clases de ingles?
10. ¿Cuál considera que es la dificultad que enfrentan los profesores para la enseñanza del inglés en la UA?

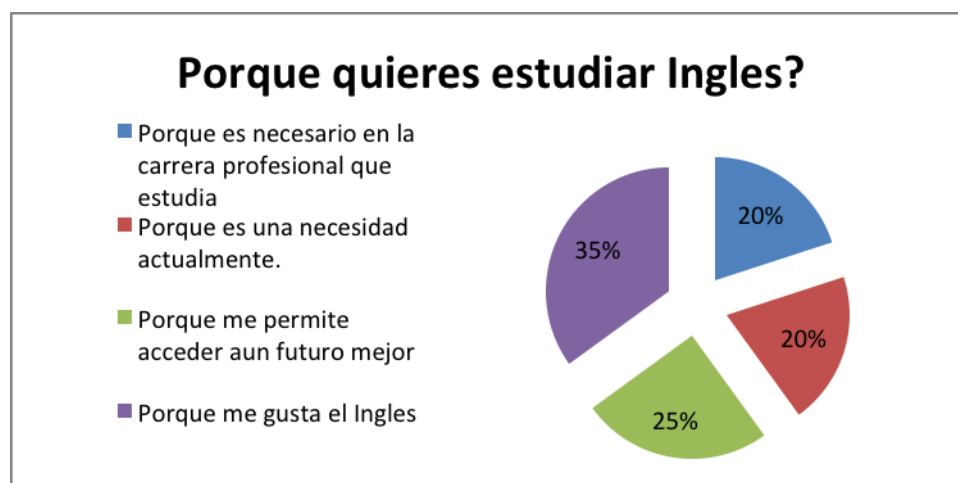


11. ¿Cuál considera que es la dificultad que enfrentan los Estudiantes para el aprendizaje del inglés en la UA?
12. ¿Qué método o enfoque de enseñanza deberían usar los profesores para las clases de inglés?
13. ¿Cómo observa el proceso de aprendizaje de los estudiantes de nivel 1 de Los cursos libres de Ingles?
14. ¿ De la habilidades que se deben desarrollar para manejar una segunda lengua (Reading , listening, writing, speaking) en cual considera que los estudiantes de 1 nivel presentan mayor dificultad al aprender el Ingles?
15. ¿Considera que el hablar un ingles fluido es indicio de que ha habido un aprendizaje significativo en los estudiantes?

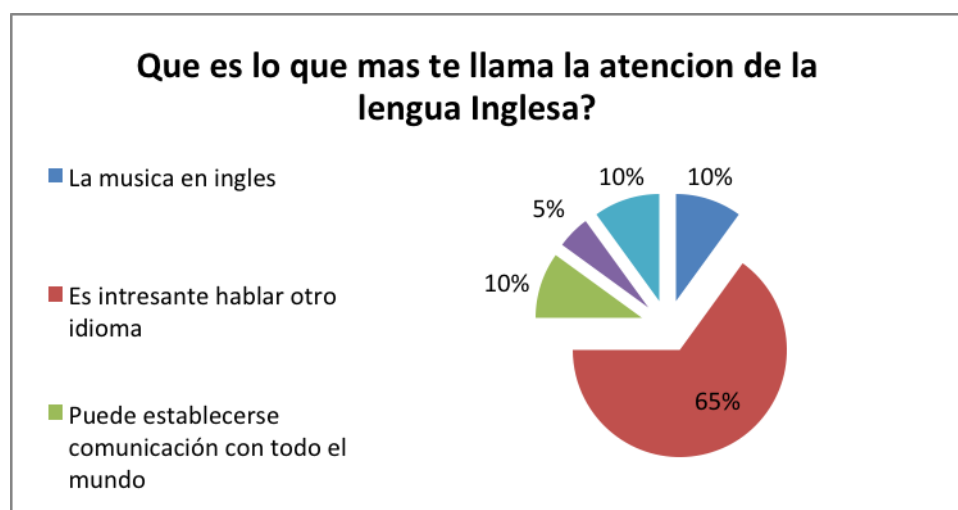
## Appendix B

### Results of Initial questionnaire (needs analysis)

#### Group A



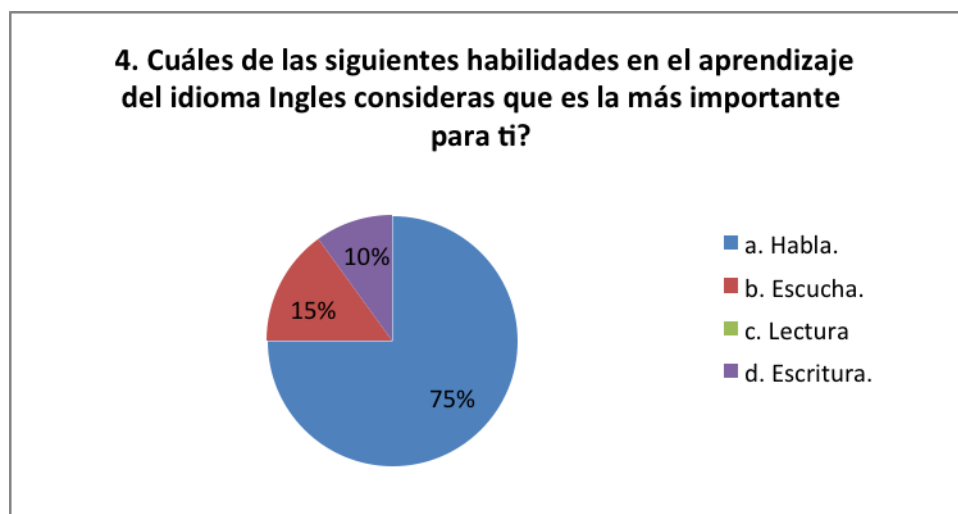
Graph 1.



Graph 2

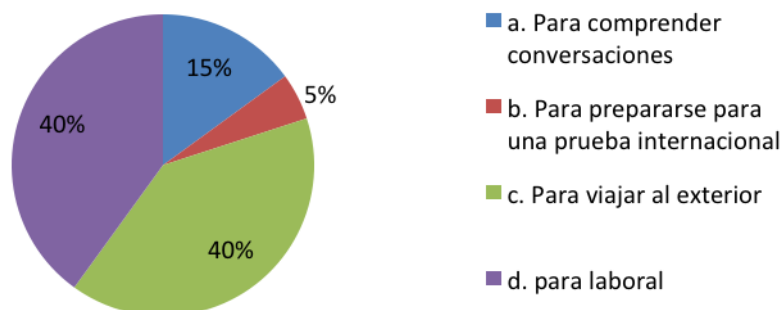


Graph 3.



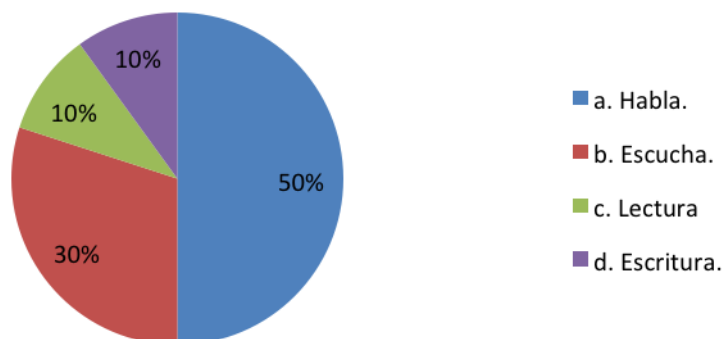
Graph 4

**5. ¿Para qué crees tú que necesitas estudiar inglés?**

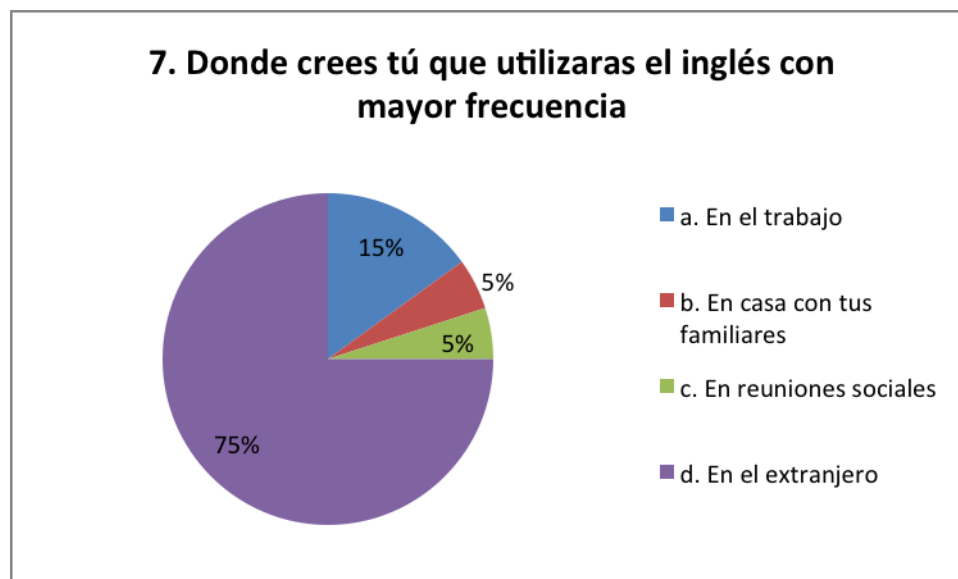


Graph 5.

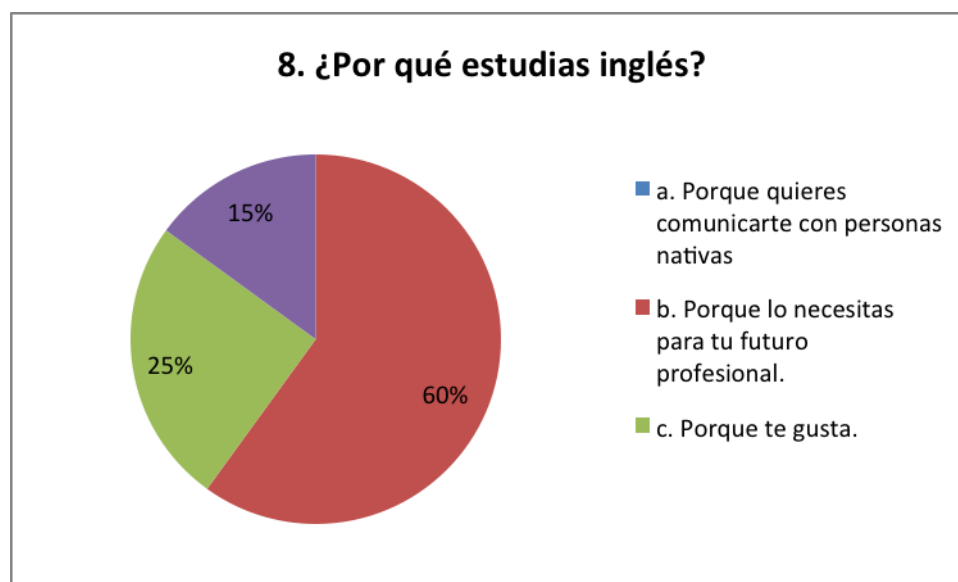
**6. ¿En qué habilidades crees que se debería enfatizar más en las clases de inglés?**



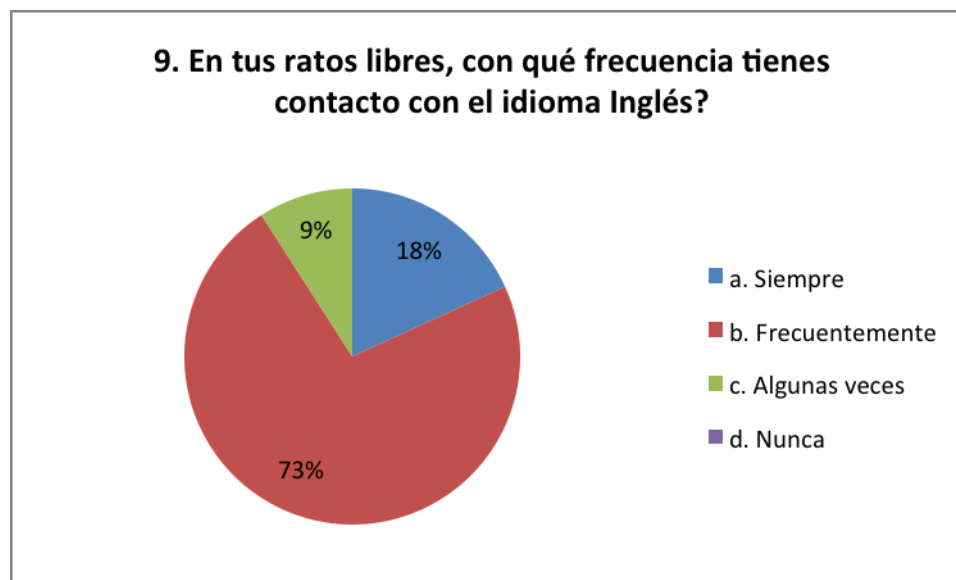
Graph 6.



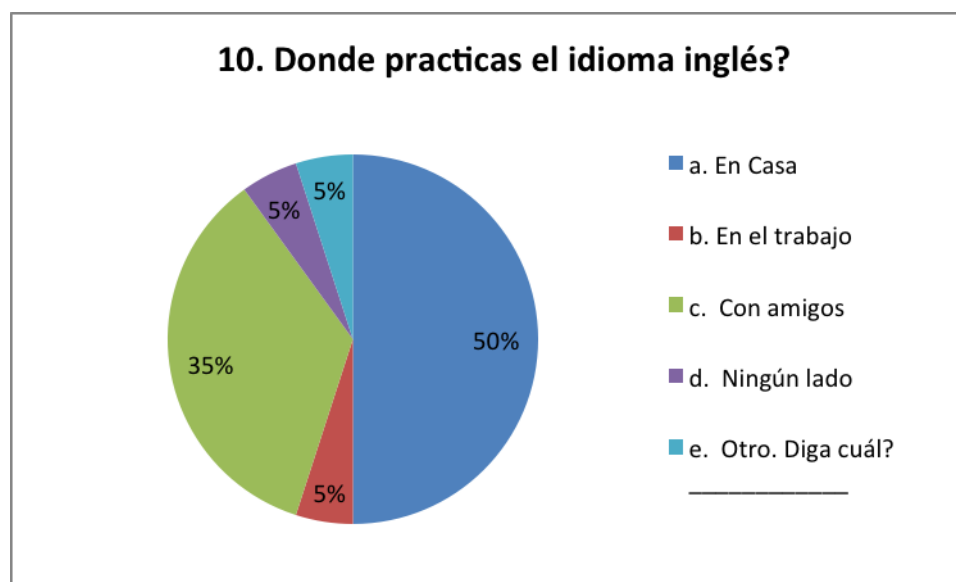
Graph 7.



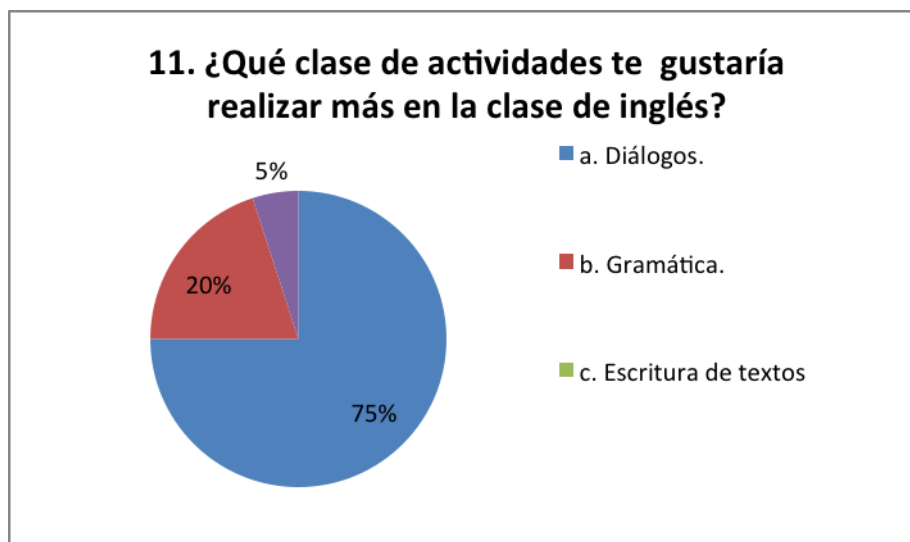
Graph 8.



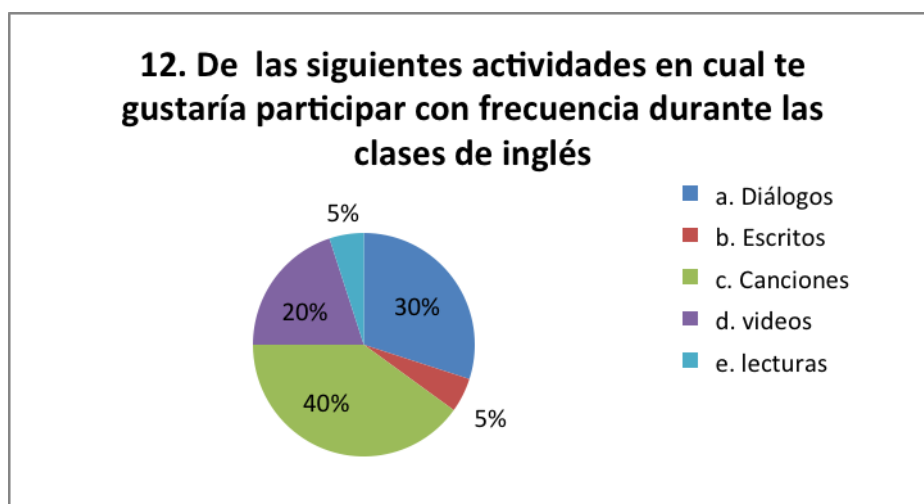
Graph 9.



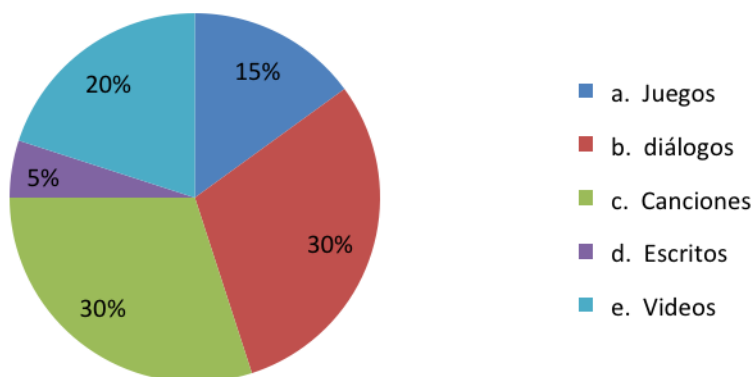
Graph 10.



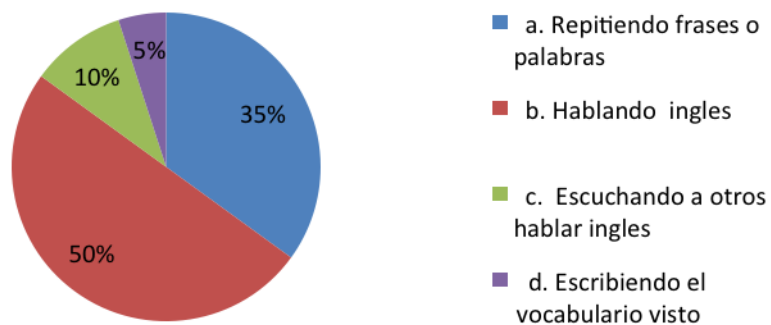
Graph 11.



Graph 12.

**13. Te gustaría aprender inglés a través de:**

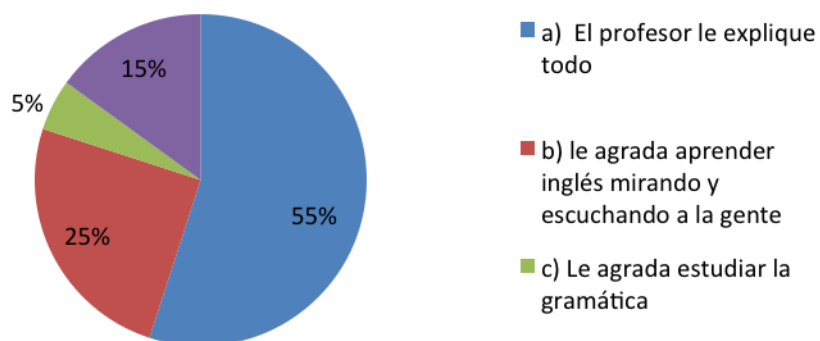
Graph 13.

**14. Como consideras tu que aprendes mejor inglés?**

Graph 14.

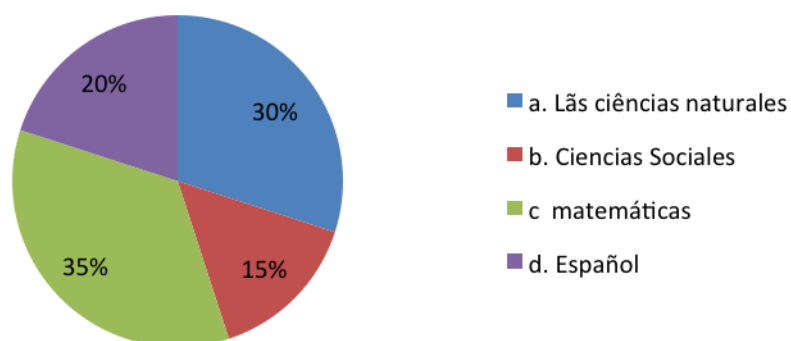


**15. Durante las clases de inglés a usted le agrada que:**

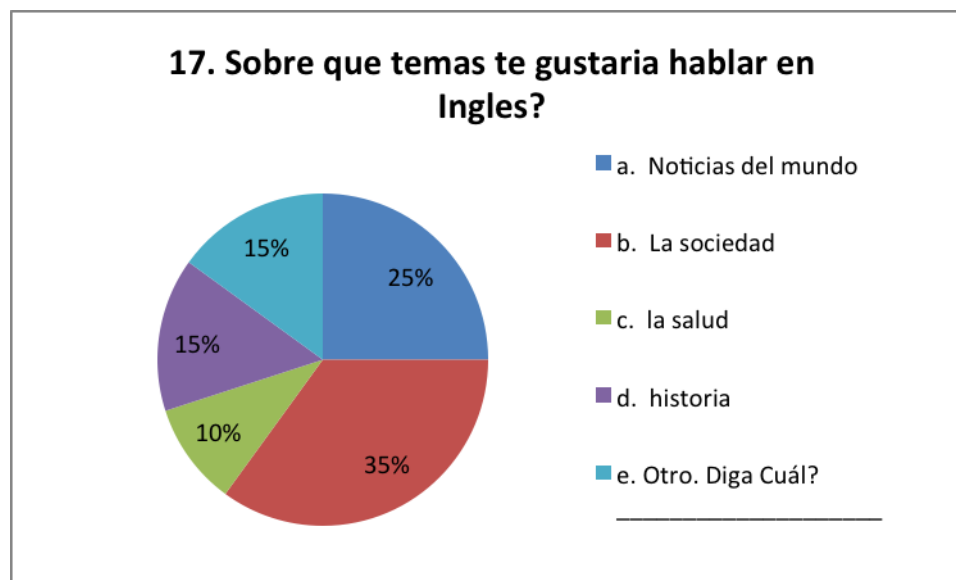


Graph 15.

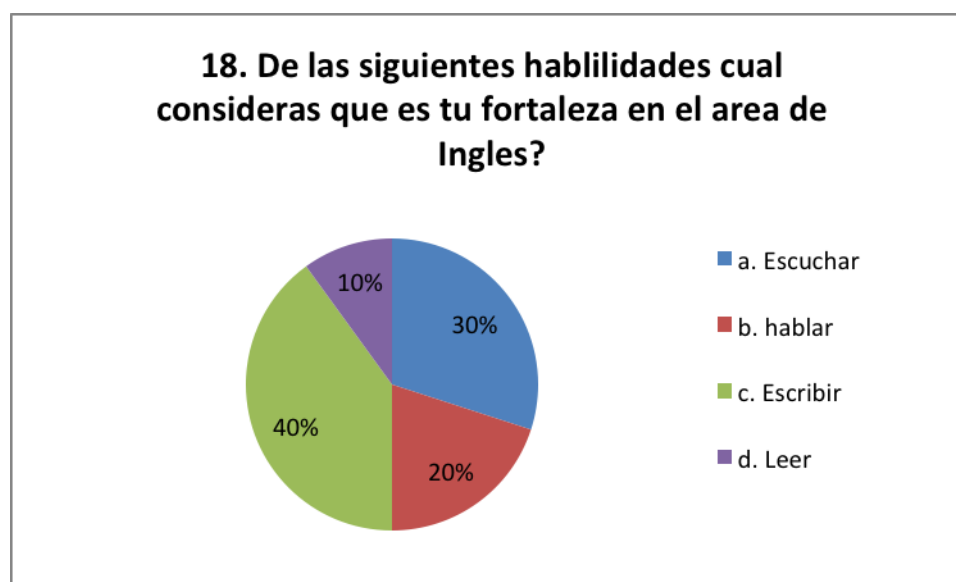
**16. Cuáles de las siguientes temas te llama más la atención?**



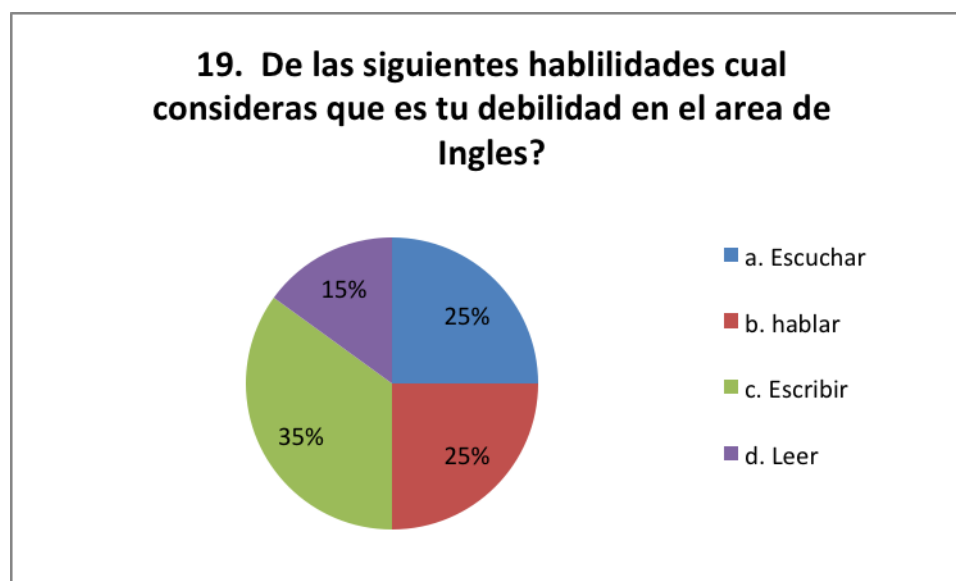
Graph 16.



Graph 17.



Graph 18.

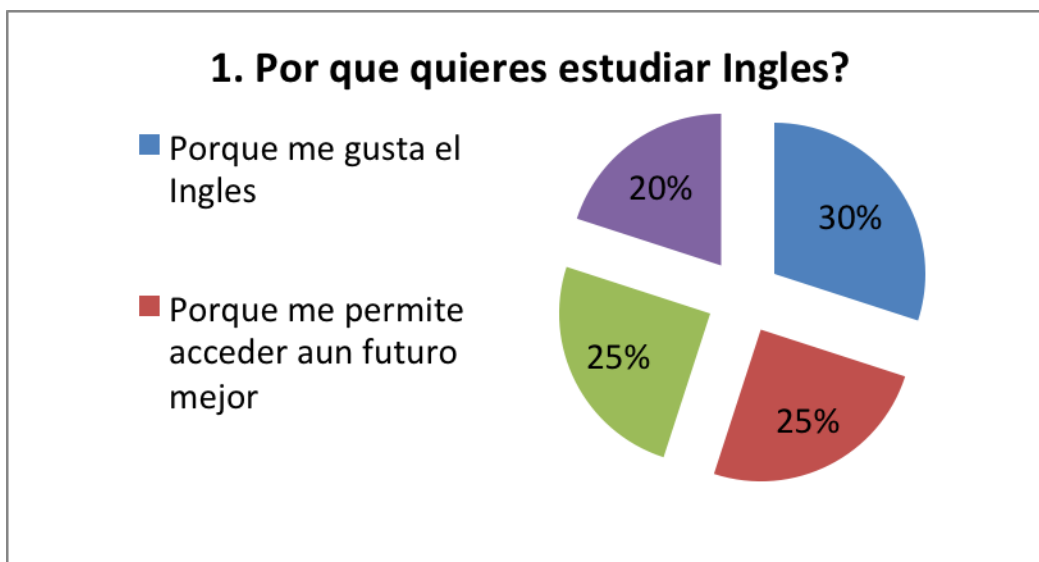


Graph 19.

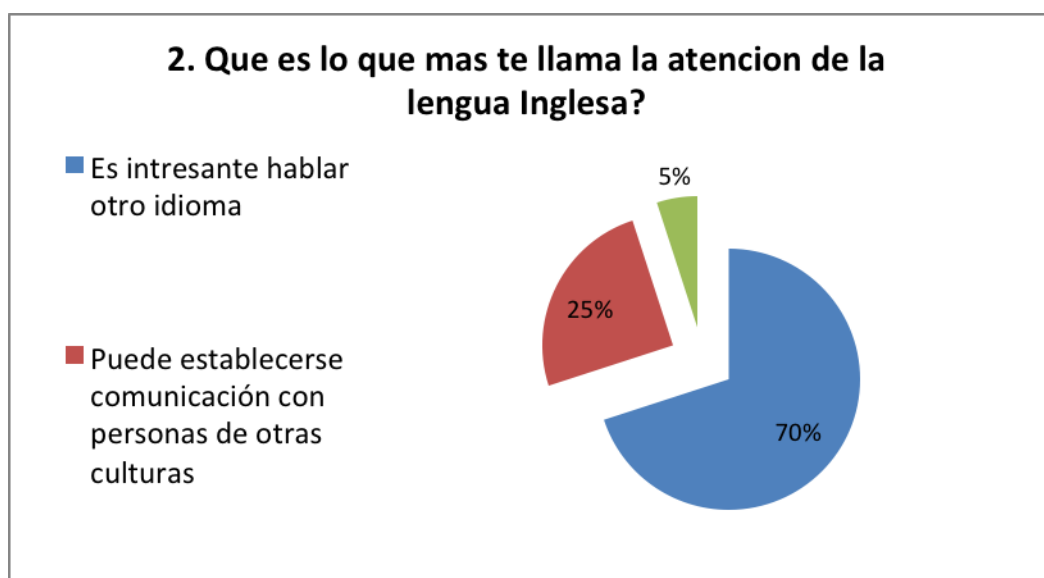
## Appendix C

### Results of Initial questionnaire (needs analysis)

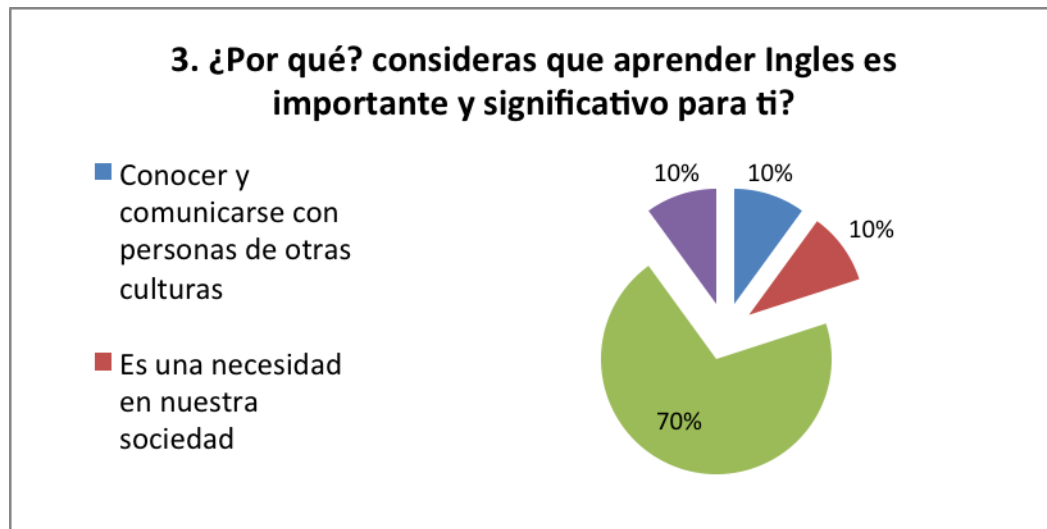
#### Group B



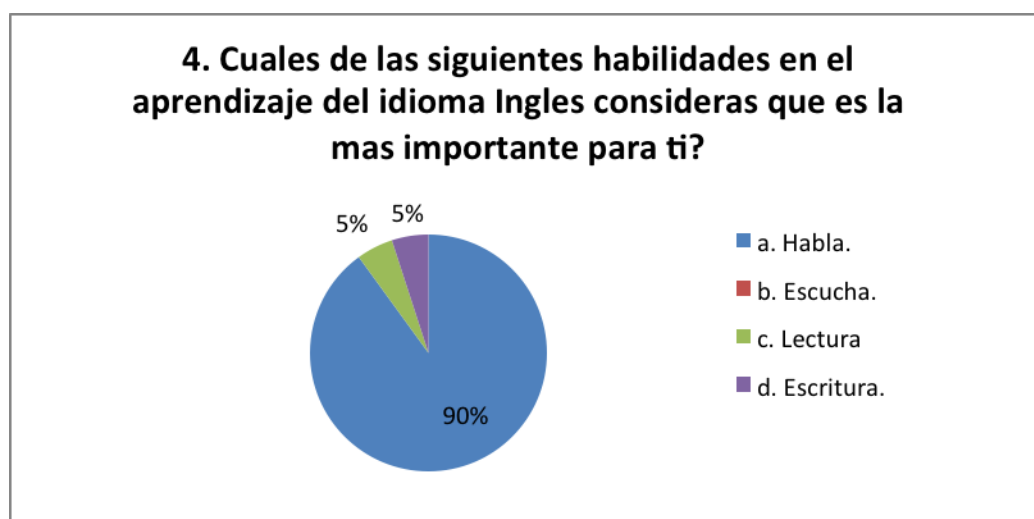
Graph 1.



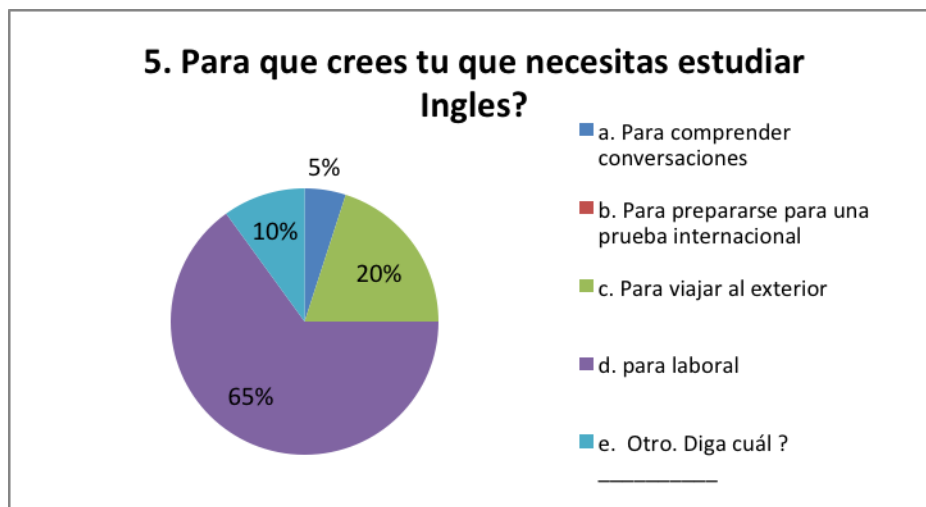
Graph 2.



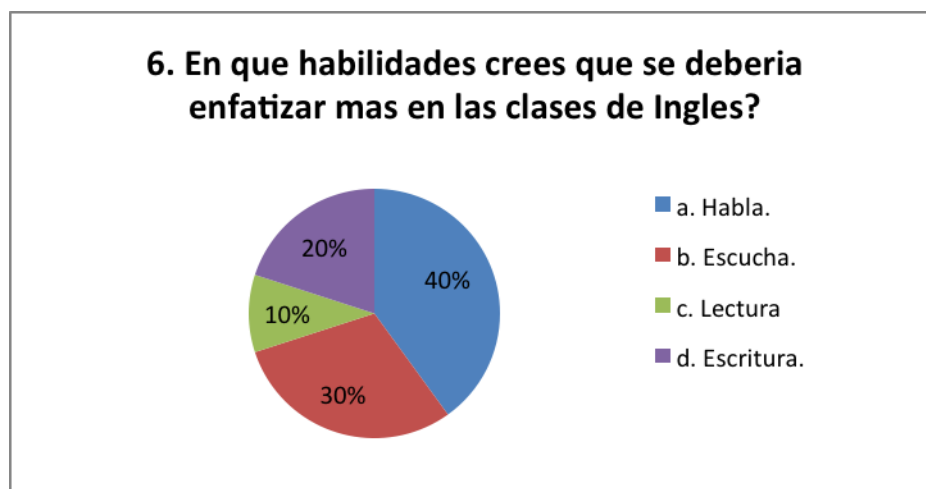
Graph 3.



Graph 4.

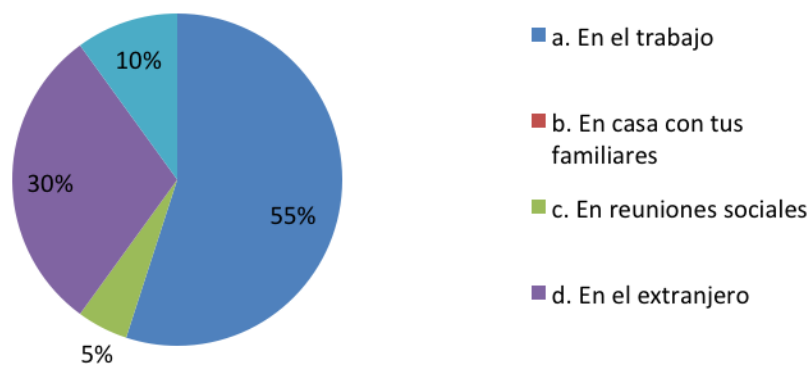


Graph 5.



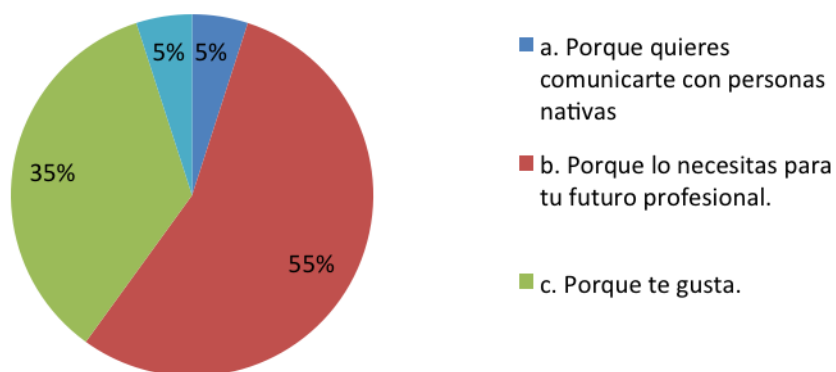
Graph 6.

**7. Donde crees tu que utilizaras el Ingles con mayor frecuencia.**

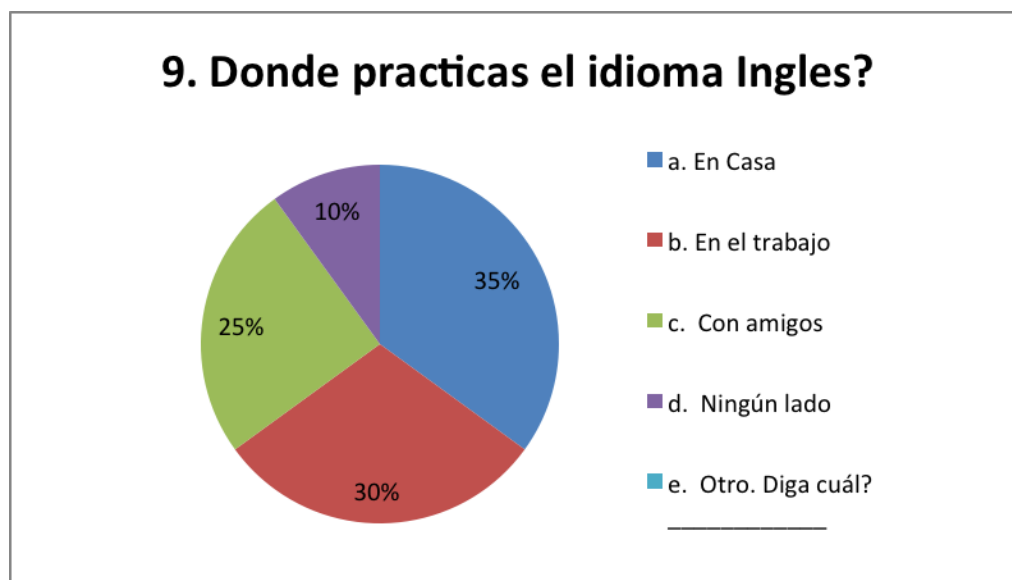


Graph 7.

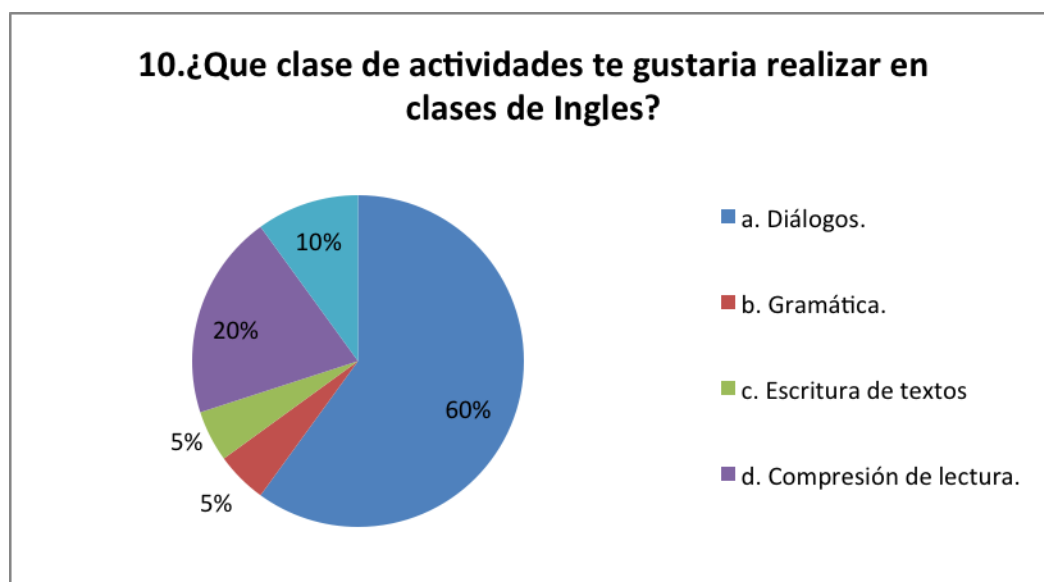
**8. ¿Por que estudias Ingles?**



Graph 8.



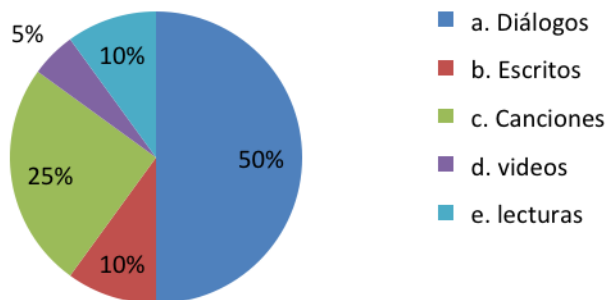
Graph 9.



Graph 10.

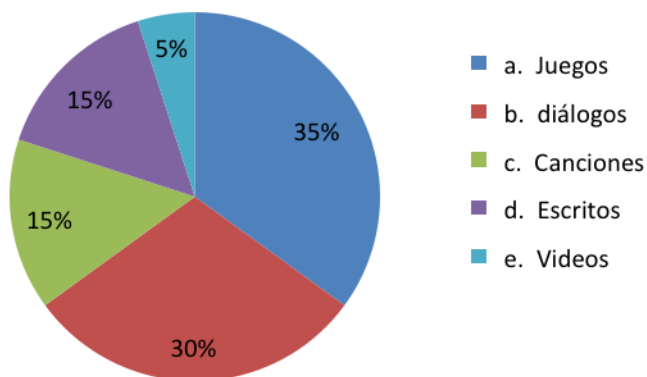


**11. De las siguientes actividades en cual te gustaria participar con frecuencia durante las clases de Ingles?**



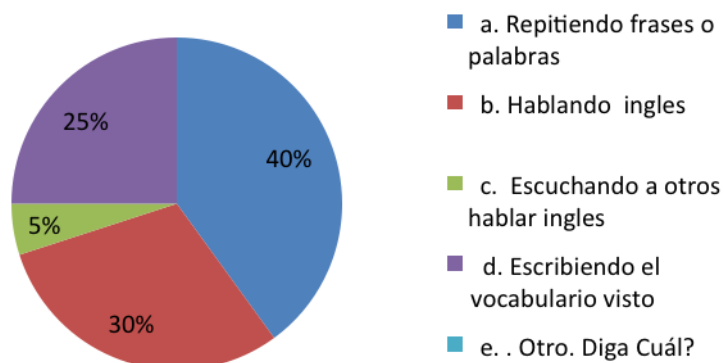
Graph 11.

**12. Te gustaria aprender Ingles atraves de:**



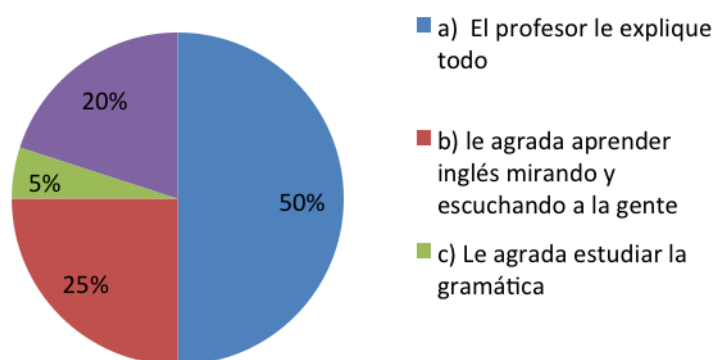
Graph 12.

**13. ¿Como consideras tu que aprendes mejor Ingles?**



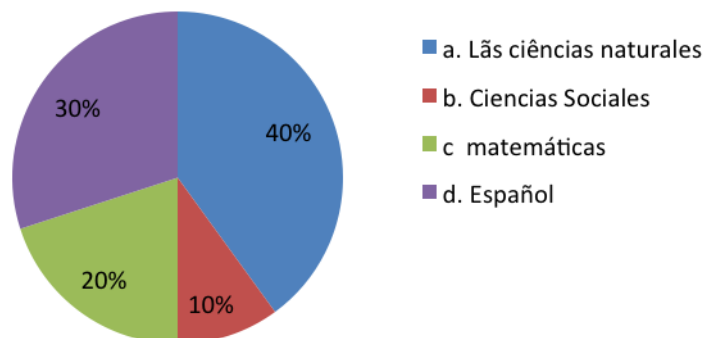
Graph 13.

**14. Durante las clases de Ingles a usted le agrada que:**



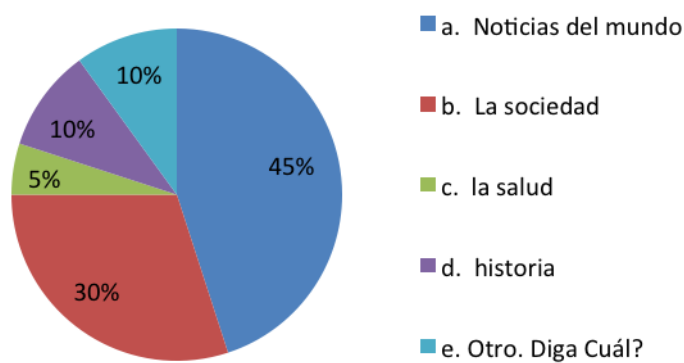
Graph 14.

**15.¿ Cuales de las siguientes temas te llama mas la atencion?**



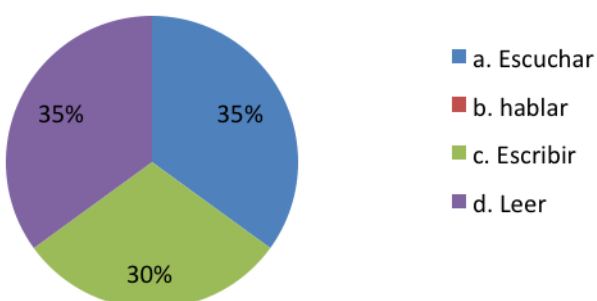
Graph 15.

**16. . Sobre que temas te gustaria hablar en Ingles?**



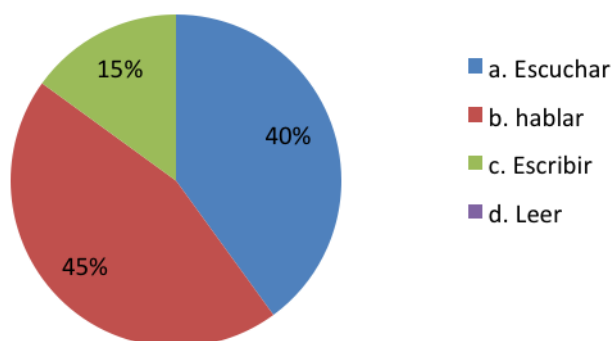
Graph 16.

**17. De las siguientes habilidades cual consideras que es tu fortaleza en el area de Ingles?**



Graph 17.

**18. De las siguientes habilidades cual consideras que es tu debilidad en el area de Ingles?**



Graph 18.



## Appendix D

**English Level I**

**Entrance Exam**

**SPEAKING RUBRIC (FLUENCY CATEGORY)**

**Date: Friday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>/2016**

<b>FLUENCY: Rate of speech; Filler words</b>	
<b>3 (Excellent)</b>	Mostly fragmented language; Some hesitations that do not affect communication; flow of ideas expressed at the level expected; Few uses of filler words
<b>2 (Good)</b>	Mostly fragmented language; Some hesitations that do affect communication somewhat (less natural pauses); Some use of filler words
<b>1 (Poor)</b>	Monosyllabic answers; numerous hesitations that make communication impossible to follow or no spoken production (long unnatural pauses); Constant use of filler words.

## **Appendix E**

**This is an oral test made to students of level II at Universidad Del Atlántico under conditions of informed consent, in order to identify the level of fluency of students at the moment to speak in English.**

### **STARTER LEVEL**

- 1) What's your name? How do you spell your name?
- 2) Where are you from?
- 3) What do you do? Do you work or are you a student?
- 4) What do you do in your free time?
- 5) Do you like sports? What sports do you like?
- 6) What do you do every day? What time do you get up? What time do you start work?
- 7) What subjects did you study at the Institution or University?

### **ELEMENTARY**

- 1) Tell me about your family
- 2) What are you going to do at the weekend?
- 3) What is your favorite place to visit in Barranquilla? And why?
- 4) How often do you go to the cinema?
- 5) Did you learn English at school? For how many years?
- 6) Where did you go the last holidays?
- 7) Have you been to an English-speaking country?

## Appendix F

### Fluency circle activities

#### TOPIC: What sports do you play?

##### Conversations # 1

<p><b>Lauren:</b> So, Justin, what do you do in your free time?</p> <p><b>Justin:</b> Well, I love sports.</p> <p><b>Lauren:</b> Really? What sports do you like?</p> <p><b>Justin:</b> My favorites are hockey, baseball, and soccer.</p> <p><b>Lauren:</b> Wow, you're a really good athlete! When do you play all these sports?</p> <p><b>Justin:</b> Oh, I don't play these sports.</p> <p><b>Lauren:</b> What do you mean?</p> <p><b>Justin:</b> I just watch them on TV!</p>	<p><b>Kayla:</b> Oh, Look. There's a talent contest on Saturday. Let's enter.</p> <p><b>Philip:</b> I can't enter a talent contest. What can I do?</p> <p><b>Kayla:</b> You can sing really well.</p> <p><b>Philip:</b> Oh, thanks..... Well, you can, too.</p> <p><b>Kayla:</b> Oh, no. I can't sing at all, but I can play the piano.</p> <p><b>Philip:</b> So, maybe we can enter the contest.</p> <p><b>Kayla:</b> Sure. Why not?</p> <p><b>Philip:</b> Ok, let's practice tomorrow!</p>
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#### TOPIC: What's the matter?

##### Conversations # 2

<p><b>Steve:</b> Hi, Kyle. How's it going?</p> <p><b>Kyle:</b> Oh, hi Steve. Not so well, actually. I don't feel well.</p> <p><b>Steve:</b> What's the matter? Hey, you don't look so good.</p> <p><b>Kyle:</b> I have a stomachache.</p> <p><b>Steve:</b> That's too bad. Do you have the flu?</p> <p><b>Kyle:</b> No, just feel really sick.</p> <p><b>Steve:</b> Well, do you want anything? A glass of soda?</p> <p><b>Kyle:</b> No, but thanks anyway.</p> <p><b>Steve:</b> Well, I'm going to have some pizza. Is that ok?</p>	<p><b>Dr. Young:</b> Hello, Ms West. How are you today?</p> <p><b>Ms. West:</b> Not so good</p> <p><b>Dr. Young:</b> What's wrong, exactly?</p> <p><b>Ms. West:</b> I'm exhausted!</p> <p><b>Dr. Young:</b> Hmm. Why are you so tired?</p> <p><b>Ms. West:</b> I don't know. I just can't sleep at night.</p> <p><b>Dr. Young:</b> Ok. Let's take a look at you.</p> <p><b>Dr. Young:</b> I'm going to give you some pills. Take one pill every evening after dinner.</p> <p><b>Ms. West:</b> Ok</p> <p><b>Dr. Young:</b> And don't drink coffee, tea, or soda.</p> <p><b>Ms. West:</b> Anything else?</p> <p><b>Dr. Young:</b> Yes. Don't work too hard.</p> <p><b>Ms. West:</b> All right. Thanks, Dr. Young.</p>
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## TOPIC: Did you have fun?

### Conversations # 3

<p><b>Jason:</b> Hi, Amy. Did you have a good weekend?</p> <p><b>Amy:</b> Well, I had a busy weekend, so I'm a little tired today.</p> <p><b>Jason:</b> Really? Why?</p> <p><b>Amy:</b> Well, on Saturday, I exercised in the morning. Then my roommate and I cleaned, did laundry, and shopped. And then I visited my parents.</p> <p><b>Jason:</b> So what did you do on Sunday?</p> <p><b>Amy:</b> I studied for the test all day.</p> <p><b>Jason:</b> Oh, no! Do we have a test today? I didn't study! I just watched TV all weekend!</p>	<p><b>Laura:</b> So, did you go anywhere last summer, Erica?</p> <p><b>Erica:</b> Yes, I did. My sister and I went to Arizona. We saw the Grand Canyon.</p> <p><b>Laura:</b> Really? Did you like it?</p> <p><b>Erica:</b> Oh yes. We loved it!</p> <p><b>Laura:</b> Did you go hiking?</p> <p><b>Erica:</b> No, we didn't. Actually, we rode horses. And one day we went whitewater rafting on the Colorado River!</p> <p><b>Laura:</b> Wow! Did you have fun?</p> <p><b>Erica:</b> Yes, I did. But my sister didn't like the rafting very much.</p>
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### Role play (students' cards)

**TOPIC:** what do you do? (Jobs / Occupations)

STUDENT A	STUDENT B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Have an interesting job</li> <li>✓ Have children</li> <li>✓ Divorced</li> <li>✓ Have a degree</li> <li>✓ Work with teenagers</li> <li>✓ Go cycling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You are coordinator of an important institution.</li> <li>✓ You want to know more about your employees.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You are a working man/woman who has a large family. You are at work. Your boss wants to talk with you.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You are a manager.</li> <li>✓ You have an employee that hasn't been performing well. He is often late. He also spends a lot of time checking his private emails and strange websites instead of doing work. Today you caught him sleeping at his desk. Please fire the employee (in a nice way).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You are a manager. You are in your office. Your best employee knocks on your door. He/she wants to talk with you.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You are at work. Please tell your boss that you have accepted a position at another company, so you will be leaving the company in 2 weeks.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You are the boss of an important company</li> <li>✓ You are so busy to stay at home</li> <li>✓ You want to instruct someone to make your work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You are an engineer</li> <li>✓ Often wake up early</li> <li>✓ You're bored with your job. You want to quit working.</li> </ul>

**TOPIC:** What are you going to do?

STUDENT A	STUDENT B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You are a chef. You know how to cook</li> <li>✓ You want to cook a special dish for the thanksgiving day. ( Steak with potatoes)</li> <li>✓ Talk about ingredients, how to cook. Say that you think it is an easy dish to cook</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You are the owner of an important restaurant in the north of the city.</li> <li>✓ You're thinking to give a special banquet with turkey and bacon for customers who always come to the restaurant. Explain to chef.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You're planning to go to Parque tayrona with</li> <li>✓ Your best friend. Tell her what thing you can do in this place.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You and your best friend have planned your vacations, but now you think that is better going to another place like Catagena because have more tourist attractions to see.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The next month is your 15 birthday. You are thinking to have a big party and invite all your friends. You call your cousin to help you to prepare and arrange all the things for your birthday.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ A member of your family calls you because she wants to ask you a favor.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You usually meet with your best friend on the weekend. But today your friend came early in the morning to tell you something important.</li> </ul>	<p>Tomorrow start the Carnival in Barranquilla. There will be a costume contest. You and your friend are preparing to participate. So, you are planning what you are going to wear. If you are going to wear a special disguise.</p>

**TOPIC:** you can't miss it (preposition of place and directions)

STUDENT A	STUDENT B
<p>Is your first day of work. You are lost, and you don't want to be late.</p> <p>Excuse me, Do you know how to get to.....</p> <p>Do you know the address?</p> <p>Could you repeat again?</p>	<p>You are coming back home, and And someone stop to you and asking some questions to find a well-known place.</p> <p>..... I used to work there.</p> <p>Go straight.....</p> <p>Yes, the address is.....</p> <p>Yes,.....</p>
<p>You are walking on the street. And someone stop to you and asking some questions to find a specific place.</p>	<p>You are on the street. You want to find the department store to buy some school materials.</p>
<p>You are driving your car and you are looking for a touristy place. You are on the road, but you don't know if turn to the right or left to get the place. And you decide to ask someone how to get the place.</p>	<p>You are in your workplace. You are selling cars' tools, Suddenly a car stops in front of the store. A driver ask you some questions. You will try to sell him a tool.</p>
<p>You re tourist in the USA and you have a restaurant guide. You want to know what are the best restaurant to eat. You will ask to someone about the restaurants that you find in the guide and How do you get there.</p>	<p>You are an American citizen who knows all about the best places to eat in the USA. You live NewYork. And you have a map of places of the Downtown area of the city.</p>

**TOPIC:** Where did you grow up? (Past tense)

<b>STUDENT A</b>	<b>STUDENT B</b>
You are in a familiar meeting with your cousins, grandfathers and brothers. They are remembering a nice experience when they were children. You will start to recount one funny experience that you and your cousins lived when were teenagers.	You are in a familiar meeting. One of your cousin start to count a nice experience lived when they were teenagers. You interrupt the conversation to remember one specific person who really was special for you. You start to describe the person.
You are in a Disco enjoying yourself with your workmates. Suddenly sounds your favorite song when you were an adolescent "Thriller" by Michael Jackson. You start to talk about what you did when you heard this song. After you try to persuade your workmates to go to the dance floor.	You are in Disco and the girl/boy that really like you ask you to dance the song that you hate. You try to explain him/her what happened when you were a teenager and why you don't like that song.
You are entering to the English class and some friends are discussing about the homeworks that the teacher sets yesterday. You know, what are the assignments that the teacher leave yesterday. Explain to your classmates.	You didn't come to the English class yesterday. SO, you ask some friends about the topic of the class and what will be the homeworks for tomorrow.
Your best friends lose faint in the street, when he wakes up don't remember nothing about himself. You start to tell important vents and experience that you lived together in the many year ego.	You are coming from school, suddenly somebody throw a ball and hit your head. You faint, and when you wake up you don't remember nothing. You start to ask about your biographical information. ( Where did you born )

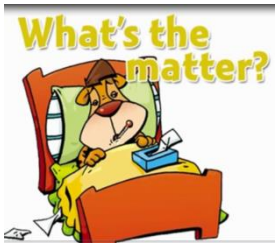
## Storytelling technique with pictures

TOPIC: What sports do you play?



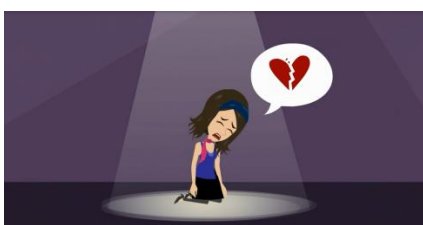
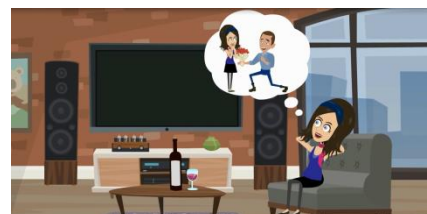
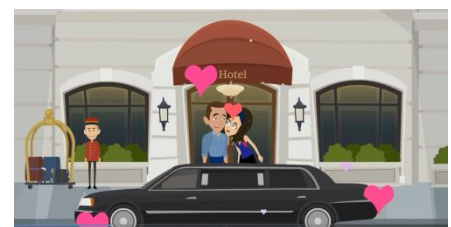
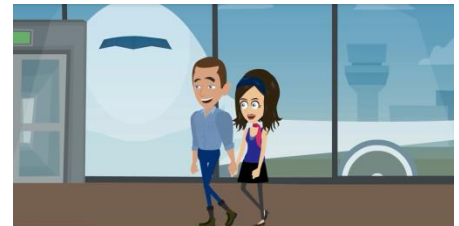
## STORYTELLING TECHNIQUE

TOPIC: What's the matter?



## STORYTELLING TECHNIQUE

**TOPIC:** Did you have fun?





## STORYTELLING TECHNIQUE

TOPIC: Did you have fun?

